NOON-DAY ADDRESSES.

DELIVERED IN

THE CENTRAL HALL,

MANCHESTER.

REV. W. L. WATKINSON.

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CENTRAL HALL, MANCHESTER.

BY THE

REV. W. L. WATKINSON,

AUTHOR OF
"THE INFLUENCE OF SCEPTICISM ON CHARACTER," "MISTAKEN SIGNS,"
ETC., ETC.

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TO

WILLIAM HOLLAND, ESQ., J.P.,

THE ELMS, HIGHER BROUGHTON,

BY WHOM I HAVE BEEN MUCH ENCOURAGED

IN THESE SERVICES.

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I.

CHRIST AND THOUGHT.

'Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; . . . all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'—1 Cor. iii. 21-3.

IT is my intention, as most of you are already aware, to call your attention to the magnificent property which we have in Christ. The various items of the great possession are stated in these verses, and the condition is made clear on which we become heirs of the splendid inheritance. This morning we will consider the attitude of the Christian towards the intellectual world and towards intellectual teachers. The passage before us contains a threefold teaching on this most important question.

I. The text must be regarded as a warning against *intellectual levity*. It would be altogether a mistake to suppose that it was the intention of the Apostle in this Epistle to speak slightingly of knowledge, or of those gifted men who are its mouthpieces. True, Paul speaks depreciatingly of a certain wisdom: 'For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;' 'the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are

vain.' But in these passages he is reprobating simply the empty speculation and eloquence of his day. There was another wisdom that he extolled, and on account of which he was prepared to suffer the loss of all things—the excellency of the knowledge made known in Christ Jesus. Paul knew that Christ had put us into a fresh attitude of reverence towards the whole intellectual world. Christ taught us the reality of truth. 'What is truth?' asks the scoffing sceptic. It is a chimera, an illusion, in his view. But when Christ caused us to see God, to recognise God's hand, God's will, God's love, He taught us that the intellectual world is a world of sobriety, of seriousness, of infinite significance. When He showed us the Father He taught us at once the reality of truth, and the truth of reality. The universe is something more than illusion, life something more than a dream, we are something more than apparitions. Christ taught us the supremacy of truth. He made us to feel that truth is the most precious, the most royal, thing of all. 'Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' Christ taught the accessibility of truth; that the search for truth is not a vain, endless, mocking search; but that we may through Him attain to the knowledge of the highest truth, the universal truth, the eternal truth. As I

say, Christ puts His people into a fresh attitude of reverence towards the whole intellectual world. He teaches us that knowledge is not idle dreaming, idle singing, idle talking; but it is full of reality and grandeur, and so He fills us with reverence and enthusiasm for the truth. And as it was no part of Paul's purpose that the Corinthians should think lightly of truth, so it was no part of his purpose that they should think lightly of their great teachers. In fact, he gives those teachers a very high place. 'Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or the world.' The world is unquestionably a magnificent thing, with a splendid use, and the Apostle puts great teachers into the same category. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork.' Intellectual men also declare the glory of God, and declare it with an eloquence surpassing that of the stars. Men who can sound new depths of feeling, reach to higher, wider thoughts, more profoundly interpret nature, give eloquent expression to the suggestions and aspirations of the mind and heart—such gifted ones are amongst the grandest gifts of God to the race. They are more than all material things.

Let us not, then, lightly esteem our intellectual teachers. All the great thinkers, and writers, and scientists are ours. We have property in all of them, even when they are not identified with the Church, and when they do not write in a directly religious spirit. A ship at sea is directed from two points of

view—there is the man with the lead taking soundings from below, and there is the man with the glass taking the bearings from above; so our race is indebted for its guidance alike to the science which concerns itself with the physical world beneath us, and to the theology which contemplates the world above and beyond us; and all purely intellectual men are ours so far as they discern and express the great truths of nature and society. And ours in this matter, my brethren, is a day of exceptionally high privilege. Our easily accessible libraries bring all the gifted teachers close to us. What should we think if we were to see a multitude of artisans and shopkeepers coming out of the National Gallery, each of them with a great picture under his arm, taking it off home? Here one with a Rubens, another with a Titian, a Rembrandt, a Landseer, a Turner, a Millais, bearing it triumphantly down the street! We should think some revolution indeed was in progress. But any day you may see an exactly corresponding sight in regard to literature. We may go to the Free Library, and take home with us Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, and a thousand other masterpieces, in fairer copies than perhaps the great masters themselves ever saw. Do not, my brethren, neglect or despise this splendid privilege. The glory of God is discovered in works of thought as in the works of nature. 'Can God, who is present in the ant's nest, the honeycomb, or the beaver's hut, be absent in the "Iliad," or in

"Faust"?' Positivism is always extolling the great philosophers, historians, poets, and freely charging Christianity with neglecting the intellectual life of mankind—that is a mistake of theirs to which we must lend no countenance. 'In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' and just as we have the spirit of Christ shall we be able to appreciate all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And as we do not neglect our literary teachers, let us not despise our religious teachers. It seems very probable that the fourth party in Corinth, 'the Christ party,' was in danger of doing this. One party said, 'I am of Paul;' another party said, 'I am of Apollos;' a third party boasted, 'I am of Cephas;' and so these rejected teachers altogether. There are some in our own day in exactly the same position. This is a mistake. Each generation has its splendidly gifted teachers, and these are to be reckoned as God's choice gifts to His Church. And not only are the golden mouth and silver tongue to be esteemed, but every lowlier teacher who speaks living words has a real value to his age. Awhile ago somebody suggested with a touch of scorn that preachers ought to be 'paid by results.' Now, for one, I altogether object to that mode of payment, and I tell you why—I do not wish to become a millionaire. 'Paid by results,' how the money would roll in upon us! To speak the word at a critical moment which shall turn a faltering young man or woman into the path of life—how much for

that? To utter thoughts which widen and purify a man's soul, and which save him from lapsing into a sordid, sensual life—how much for that? To inspire with fresh hope one sinking into grief and unbelief and despair—how much for that? Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins—how much for that? No, no, not payment by results here, at any rate. That must be left to the great Paymaster. Men with religious insight and utterance are to be valued as gifts of God—they are the stars in the hand of the Great Head of the Church, to guide, to cheer, to enlighten, until the shadows flee away.

II. The text must be regarded as a warning against *intellectual servility*. Whilst it would appear that one party amongst the Corinthians set little store by any of the great teachers of the Church, the other three parties were in danger of paying these teachers exaggerated homage. 'I am of Paul,' 'I am of Apollos,' 'I am of Cephas.' The several sections made heroes of these gifted men. Paul shows them how mistaken they were in paying such deference. Says the noble Apostle, You do not exist for them; they exist for you—they are endowed for your sake, that they may be helpers of your faith and joy. The greatest teachers are not to be slavishly followed. The greatest teachers are imperfect and erring. 'Therefore let no man glory

in men.' The Apostle has just been remarking on the limitations of human knowledge, that the greatest sages have been guilty of the most serious errors; he then proceeds, '*therefore* let no man glory in men.' The most gifted men are not infallible, and consequently they are to be followed with caution. The greatest teachers are only instrumental. 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?' There is a certain respect to be paid to the husbandman who brings forth precious fruits, but we reserve our full wonder and reverence for Him Who stands behind the gardener, and Who alone gives the increase. Paul, Apollos, Cephas are at best but mediums, agents, instruments; God Himself is the Giver of thought, life, power, blessing. There must, then, be no servility of soul in any of the congregation of the saints. No thinker must be permitted to coerce your intellect, no theologian to dictate your creed, no ecclesiastic to bind your conscience. God endows men that they may help one another, not that they may enslave one another.

Brethren, here is a lesson for us to-day. A political tyranny is not the only tyranny of which we have reason to be afraid, neither is it the worst. An intellectual despotism is worse than a political one. And intellectual men are very prone to set up such usurpations, and lord it over their less-gifted or less-cultured brethren. We talk about kings and

their arbitrary tempers, but men of talent are often more arbitrary still, and they seek to establish a fiercer tyranny. Sometimes they turn the republic of letters into a tyranny ; sometimes they set up lordship in the Church. And it is a curious fact that whilst in this day, when we are so sensitive to political aggression, we are singularly tolerant of intellectual despotism. We see this despotism sometimes in philosophy. We are soon overawed by the learning, the eloquence, the imperiousness of a writer, and accept as gospel what Carlyle says, or Arnold, or Ruskin, or Huxley, or Spencer. We see this intellectual mastery sometimes in politics. Men flagrantly surrender their intellect to some gifted statesman. And we see this despotism in religion. We see it in the Roman Catholic Church in a very pronounced form. It is often witnessed in the High Church party in the Establishment. And in the Nonconforming Churches an overweening ascendency is sometimes established by an exceptionally gifted theologian or preacher. Now, our text warns us against such ignoble submission. 'We are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' We do not stop with Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas ; we are thankful for the stars, but it is still our privilege to have access to the Central Luminary, the everlasting Light. There is a great truth in the admonition of the Master, 'Hear the Church,' but we must be very jealous of any attempt to deprive us of intellectual inde-

pendence, any attempt to impose our faith upon us by any hierarchy whatever. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' 'Ye are the temple of God.' All believers are built into a living house, and all of them, even the humblest of them, share the illumination and dignity belonging to that most sacred shrine. It was given to tent-makers and fishermen to see truths not seen by prophets and kings; it was given to a peasant's son to find for Christendom the Divine doctrine it had lost; it was given to a tinker in Bedford to have visions of God as Isaiah and Ezekiel had; it was given to Wesley's 'ragged regiment' to see truths of life hidden from the wise and prudent; it was given to a Northamptonshire cobbler to seize afresh and to give practical efficacy to the magnificent truth of the universality of salvation in Jesus Christ. Evils may arise out of an exaggerated individuality, but the right of the individual to be taught of God is too clear and too precious to be relinquished on any pretence whatever. Christianity has nothing to do with intellectual servility; it leaves us victims to no human dogmatism; it declares that Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas are ours, not that we are theirs; it brings us to Christ, Who is the Light of the world, to God, Who is Light, and in Whom there is no darkness at all

III. The text must be regarded as a warning against *intellectual partiality*. These four sects—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ-ians—were mutually exclusive; they accepted the special truth represented by their leader, and ignored the rest. In opposition to this, Paul declares that all the great teachers belong to the whole Church. The members of the Church are not to shut themselves up to any one minister, but to get light and blessing out of them all, even as God hath given to every man. It has been said that an intellectual man ought to have preferences, but no exclusions; the Christian may have sundry preferences, but he ought to be prepared to get light from all who can give it. He must recognise the special truths insisted upon by philosophy on the one side, and by theology on the other. He must be willing to receive light from all pulpits. He must joyfully concede the preciousness of the work of evangelisation wrought by the several denominations. He must exult to blend his voice in the music of many harpers unto God and the Lamb. Why should we shut ourselves up to one meadow when the whole land is ours; to one tree when the forest is ours; to one constellation when the whole firmament is ours?

A distinguished preacher of the Establishment, Canon Knox-Little, in one of his sermons,* speaks thus: 'Treat the sacred Scriptures as though they had fallen from heaven into your hands ready printed and

* *The Light of the World.*

bound, use them to pick out for yourself—with no reference to the guidance of the Church which guards them—what you will and what you will not accept as the truth, and you will land inevitably in some department of half-belief or unbelieving. You will be a sceptic, or a Freethinker, or a Baptist, or a Socinian, or a Wesleyan, or a What-not. You will pick and cling to one ray of light or tract of shadow, you will select one atom of glorious glass from the Church's emblazoned window, in which shines the Christ, but the Christ as a whole you will have failed to see before you. You will have missed the Catholic Faith. Every heresy or half-belief arises from selecting and exaggerating some one part of the revealed faith to the neglect of the whole, and this from neglecting the Scripture command to hear the Church.' Now, in these eloquent words you have good advice and a bad example. You are told to listen to the Catholic Church, that is, not to Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, but to all of them. Not to any one of the denominations outside of the Establishment, or to any one of the congeries of denominations inside the Establishment, but you are to pay respect to the Catholic Church. This is, in my view, hearing the Catholic Church, and such hearing saves from narrowness, error, disproportion. But the Canon gives us a bad example. 'You will be a sceptic, or a Freethinker, or a Baptist, or a Socinian, or a Wesleyan, or a What-not.' Oh, how much untruthfulness, uncharitableness, and contempt breathes in that

sentence! The Canon has mistaken the Roman Catholic Church and a section of the Anglican Church for the Catholic Church. He has fallen a victim to denominationalism, to bigotry, to malice. *He* has got one atom of glass from the Church's emblazoned window, in which shines the Christ, and it is not one of the most glorious atoms either, it is not a fragment from the Master's face or bosom; it is one of the duller bits out of the hem of His raiment. Let us feel that *all* are ours. Light from Newman, light from Martineau, light from Spurgeon, light from General Booth, light from Knox-Little—if he has any to give. We claim the fulness of truth, and we are willing to be taught by Paul, Apollos, Cephas—they are *all* ours, and we are God's.

II.

CHRIST AND NATURE.

'For all things are yours; . . . the world . . . is yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'—1 Cor. iii. 21-23.

WE are justified in regarding 'the world' here mentioned as intending generally the physical universe—all created things; and it is my design this morning to show that the treasures of the material universe constitute the property of redeemed man.

I. *Let us seek to establish the truth of the text—that the world is ours.* Many in our day utterly deny and ridicule this assertion that the world is ours; they reject it as the veriest superstition. Men once imagined that the earth was the centre of the universe, round which the whole system of the heavens turned, a conception that has been entirely disproved. Now, once more man imagines himself to be the centre of the universe of things, the supreme aim of the world, the end for which the whole creation has groaned and travailed through countless ages, and groans and travails still. This latter view is declared by some to be a similar error to that of making the earth the

centre of the starry system, only a much more pernicious error. They stigmatise it as an insane egotism.* But, my brethren, if the world has a design and a centre, what is the supreme aim of the physical universe if man be not that aim? What is the centre of the world of things if man be not that centre? If the material world has a centre, if it has an aim, surely it is no insane egotism to say that the noblest of the creatures is that centre and aim. To deny the supremacy of man in the system of nature is like denying the centrality of the sun, and going back to the heresy of the centrality of the earth. That man is the greater light, about which all things revolve, is very evident.

The world is *realised* only in man. We are apt to think of the glorious world about us as lying altogether outside of us, as existing in form, and brightness, and beauty whether man were here or not, as a creation altogether independent of our presence and powers. But we forget that the world was only a mass of dark force, a dance of atoms, a whirlpool of vibrations, until Adam came. The sun did not shine until there was a human eye; there was no music until there was a human ear; there was no fragrance until there was a human nostril; there was no sweetness until there was a human lip. The world realises itself only on man's nerves, in man's brain, let us say in man's soul; the glory of the

* Maudsley: *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings.*

universe is revealed only in the sense and in the thought of humanity. All the splendour of the world shone out for the first time in the brain of the first man, and when the last man closes his eyes the splendid world will lapse again into silence and darkness. If any one objects that the world is realised in the nervous organisation of animals, we reply it is as certain as certain can be that the sun is to no animal what it was to Newton, the rose is to no animal what it was to Shakespeare, the rainbow is to no animal what it was to Wordsworth.* Is it too much to say, then, that man is the centre and supreme end of the world?

The world is *comprehended* only by man. We have no reason to suppose that any bird, or reptile, or beast, in any large or worthy sense, comprehends the universe of which it forms a part. The striking feature of man is his passion to master the secrets of nature, his capacity to understand those secrets. He will penetrate to the depth of things; he will know the nature, the origin, the history, the purpose, of all things; he will never rest until he has formed a rational conception of the laws and forces which go to the making up of his environment. He alone aims to comprehend this wonderful orb. Geology makes the world of the past ours; astronomy makes the worlds above our head ours; a score of sciences make the world at our feet ours. The world is ours,

* See Lubbock: *Senses of Animals*, p. 192.

for we comprehend its laws, perceive its unity, mark its developments, rejoice in all its wonderful movements and manifestations. A thing is pre-eminently made for the mind which comprehends it, appreciates it, which finds in it a source of gratification and development; surely there is no truer criterion of proprietorship than this, and, tried by this criterion, it is not too much to say that man is the centre and supreme end of the world.

The world is *claimed* only by man. Man instinctively acts as if the whole world belonged to him, and in a thousand ways he proceeds to exercise lordship over it. The fundamental conviction of the human mind is that the whole universe exists for man's illumination and gratification, and we act accordingly. Ages ago the Psalmist celebrated the splendid sovereignty of man: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." And the fact is not less apparent to-day. Each living creature, bird or beast, keeps within its narrow world, but men with telescope, microscope, spectroscope go forth to claim the wide universe; everything is related to them, they are related to everything, and the light, the forces, the treasures, the flocks, the fruits of the wide, wide world are claimed by man for his instruction, his enrichment, his fulness of joy.

Says one of these naturalists very scornfully, 'It is well to let down our metropolitan pride a little.

Man thinks himself at the top, and that the immense display and prodigality of nature are for him. But they are no more for him than they are for the birds and beasts, and he is no more at the top than they are. He appeared upon the stage when the play had advanced to a certain point, and he will disappear from the stage when the play has reached another point, and the great play go on without him. The geological ages, the convulsions and parturition throes of the globe, were to bring him forth no more than the beetles. Is not all this wealth of the seasons, these solar and sidereal influences, this depth and vitality and internal fire, these seas and rivers and oceans, and atmospheric currents, as necessary to the life of the ants and worms we tread under foot as to our own? And does the sun shine for me any more than for yon butterfly? What I mean to say is, we cannot put our finger upon this or that, and say, 'Here is the end of nature.'"*

But no scepticism has shattered or can shatter man's diadem. If reason has any validity at all, the throes of the globe through geological ages were to bring forth man rather than the beetles. The wealth, solar, sidereal, planetary, is ours in a sense in which ants and worms cannot participate. The sun does shine for us more than it does for a butterfly. The sceptical view only requires to be stated as it is stated in this passage to make its falsity manifest.

* John Burroughs: *Birds and Poets.*

If men acknowledge that the material realm has a centre, a master, an end, they are compelled to recognise that humanity alone meets the requirements of the case. If you take away man you must put what is inferior in his place. Our place in nature is that of the sun in the solar system, solitary and supreme ; without us the world has no meaning—it does not realise itself, it is not understood, it is not utilised to any large and adequate end.

II. *Let us show how in Christ we realise our property in created things.* Now, whilst it is manifest that man is the ideal centre and end of the physical universe, it is equally manifest that for some reason or other he is not its actual undisputed head and lord. 'We see not yet all things put under him.' Man has dropped the sceptre, or it has been wrested from him the world ; is often our master ; we are tyrannised over by it, crushed by it. But in Christ the proprietorship and government of the world are being restored to us, the ideal becomes the actual.

1. To illustrate this look at the Christian *creed*—the Christian creed about God. We find Job in asserting his innocence speaking thus : 'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness ; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand : this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge : for I should have denied the God that is above' (ch. xxxi. 26-8). But this is exactly what was done in ancient times

beyond the bounds of Israel. In Egypt, in Greece, in Rome, the powers of nature were regarded as Divine, and the God that is above was denied. Men worshipped Nature, looking upon themselves as wholly inferior to the world, as the slaves of the sun, the sea, the sky, the stars. And this doctrine is maintained in our day by many intellectual men. The author of "Natural Religion" tells us that "the scientific man has a theology and a God." But that theology is simply geology and astronomy, that God is nature, the material universe with its laws and forces and movement; it is indeed the old idolatry of the stars, only expressed in fresh language. Now, Christianity delivers us from this tyranny of superstition by making manifest to us "the God that is above." Jesus Christ had not a particle of sympathy with the great nature-systems of His day. He evidently felt the grandeur of the sky, the glory of the sun, the splendour of the grass and flower; but He never kissed His hand to these natural glories. Jesus Christ taught that God sits above, and that nature is simply an organ working out God's will and glory in the fullest, highest welfare and joy of mankind. 'You are the world's,' says a sceptical science, reducing us to a sad idolatry, a sad slavery. You must bend down and worship this material universe, a blind, irrational thing. The conscious must worship the unconscious, the living the dead, the moral the mechanical. This is a

dreadful slavery—the worst slavery of all. Out of this false attitude of man to nature spring profound humiliations and miseries. The world, like fire, is a grand servant but a bad master; let it be your servant and it shall wait upon you, it shall enrich you, it shall exalt you, it shall stimulate and develop your whole nature in the most wonderful and most precious manner; but make nature your divinity, and it enslaves your intellect, it starves your affections, it dwarfs and destroys you as all idolatry does. "You are God's," says Jesus Christ. He fixes our eye on the God of heaven; He tells us that God made the world for us, that He rules it for us, and just as we hold to that doctrine and worship, and serve God, so shall the world be ours, ministering to our utmost satisfaction of soul and sense. In the power of the faith of the one true and living God the world becomes ours. 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens.' Or take the Christian creed about man. Some of our teachers love to exalt nature at the expense of man. They remind us of the vastness of the universe, and the limitation of man; of the force of the universe, as against our weakness; of the durability of the universe, as against our mortality. And when they have done this it is easy to add, 'You are the world's; it is everything, you are nothing.' But Christianity is a grand protest against this falsehood. It asserts with mighty em-

phasis the dignity of human nature. It declares that the divinity is in us, and not in matter. There is an element in us that is not in the universe; an element that is vaster, for it dreams of infinity; an element that is stronger, for it forces nature to do its bidding; an element that is more abiding, for it claims immortality. All this Christ confirms. The dignity of man has been demonstrated by the fact of the Incarnation with overwhelming force. God will see a sun go out as we see a spark, but Bethlehem and Calvary declare that the redemption of the soul is precious.

2. For further illustration of the fact that in Christ we realise our property in created things, consider Christian *character*. Not only does Christ affirm the innate dignity of man, but by His truth and grace He realises that dignity in all who trust in Him. All dominion is founded, not in craft, not in force, but in righteousness. We have lost dominion over nature because we have lost our righteousness; but Christ, in restoring the race to moral perfection, restores to us the lost sceptre, and the saints in Christ reign as kings with a sovereignty ever more absolute and vast. What humanity has lost of authority over nature through ignorance, lust, pride, sloth, covetousness, violence, cruelty, it shall recover through Christ in humility, kindness, wisdom, earnestness, mercy, truth, and love. 'For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was to Abraham through the

righteousness of faith.' Through righteousness shall we become heirs of the world. More righteousness, and our dominion shall extend over the vast, wild, mysterious forces of the material universe ; more righteousness, and the birds of the air, the cattle of the field, the beasts of the forest shall become our loyal subjects as we do not now dream ; more righteousness, and desert places shall blossom as the rose. The world is ours in the power of righteousness, and righteousness is ours because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

3. For the final illustration of the fact that in Christ we realise our property in created things, glance at our Christian *civilisation*. How does it come to pass that science should have attained to such perfection in Christendom ? There has been no science like it before, so comprehensive, so exact. It investigates the profoundest secrets of nature, it converts the great world into a whispering gallery, it makes the lightning our messenger, it enables us to fly as on the wings of the wind, under its spell the sun paints our pictures, it converts our refuse into articles and essences of splendour and fragrance, it gives us possession of the treasures of the darkness and the light, of the heaven and the earth. Science sprang up ages ago in China, but it soon lost its vigour and became an aborted, arrested thing ; it flashed out with the Moors in a blaze of splendour, only to sink again into the darkness of paganism. How is it that science sprang

up in the heart of Christendom—a pervasive, living, progressive science, as we know it this day? How is it that it was not found where Buddhism reigns, or Confucianism, or Mohammedanism? Surely it is no accident that modern science, the science which appreciates, which comprehends, which utilises the whole world, should have sprung up and unfolded into perfection under the influence of Christianity. Christ has girded our scientific men, although some of them know Him not. The glorious science which is making the world ours is ours because Christ is ours. Again, how does it come to pass that the commerce which is realising the riches of the world should have sprung up and come to such wonderful perfection in Christendom? How is it that it does not belong to China, to Turkey, to India? Surely, again, this is no accident. It is because Christ has set up amongst us the kingdom of God and His righteousness that all things are being added unto us. Christ is the Heir of all things, and we have only to look at the civilisation of Christendom, its literature, its science, its commerce, to feel that Christ will make us to inherit the wealth of the world if we are only loyal to Him.

If the world is ours, let us carefully claim it. We often talk of a godless science, but there would be less godless science if religious people more directly and fully put in their claim to nature. If you notice a piece of unfenced, unclaimed ground anywhere, somebody will shoot his rubbish there; and so if we

neglect to claim nature for God an atheistical science will soon accumulate its rubbish there. Why, I have seen Christian people get up and walk out of the chapel because I was saying a few words about God's marvellous works, and what they teach ; they said they came to hear the Gospel. Brethren, nature was made by Christ, by Him it consists, and it is full of Gospel truth and blessing for all who have spiritual discernment. Be sure you realise all that creation will give and teach. Enjoy all its physical fruits and treasures so far as they may be given unto you. Then remember its intellectual ministry. It is to enrich thought, to exalt and expand the mind, to kindle the imagination and feeling. One of the old poets says :—

> 'The poet gathers fruit from every tree ;
> Yea, grapes from thorns and figs from thistles he.
> Plucked by his hand, the basest weed that grows
> Towers to a lily, reddens to a rose.'

And we must all be Christian poets, finding wisdom and beauty and joy in the manifold works of God's hand. But, above and beyond all this, nature has a ministry to our spirit. Edward Irving justly said ; 'To spiritualise nature is rightly to interpret nature.' Our Lord showed us this. What lessons He found in the lily and in the bird ! In the grain of wheat dying in the ground ! In the grain of mustard-seed ! In the vine and its branches ! In the sun ! In the colours of the sky ! There are sermons not only in

stones, but in everything. You say you don't like sermons. Ah! but think of God's sermons. Nothing dull or dry or dead here. How full of a strange eloquence is all nature, for every word of God is a thing, and every thing a word of God! Let us be sure that we get out of this great world all its high teachings as Christ did, to the perfecting of our knowledge of God, and to the strengthening of our spirit in all righteousness. 'The world is ours.' It is a magazine of instruments for our service; it is a school full of diagrams for our instruction; it is a sanctuary whose grand symbols, properly interpreted, are sacraments indeed. 'Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man.' Yes, and man was not made for the world, but the world for man, and we must be careful to realise all the wealth and blessing of our great inheritance.

Does any one object, 'But this proprietorship is all visionary—how can a man without a foot of land say, The world is mine?' Brethren, to say that the fields and hills are ours only when we have certain parchments made out in our name, and locked up in our iron safe, that is the artificial proprietorship. That is truly ours which enlarges our mind, rejoices our heart, purifies our life. The world is ours in no visionary sense—it is ours as it is Christ's, ours as it is God's. 'For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.'

III.

CHRIST AND LIFE.

'For all things are yours: . . . . life . . . . is yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'—1 Cor. iii. 21-3.

'LIFE is yours,' that is, whatever pertains to the inner consciousness, and whatever in the external world has to do with the development and rejoicing of that consciousness, is part of our great human inheritance. Whatever that great word 'life' means of consciousness, joy, energy, liberty, diffusiveness, growth, hope, is ours in Christ.

I. We maintain that life is ours as against the *Fatalist*. The fatalist, a great figure in the modern world as he was in the ancient, teaches that we are the subjects and slaves of time and place, of organisation and circumstance. He confidently affirms that we are in bondage to the exterior universe, that we move only in the blind movement of the world of things and forces about us. We serve the external world; the individual exists for the sake of the type, for the sake of the nation, for the sake of the race, and when he has served the social

or the scientific end he drops into the limbo of darkness and nothingness. Our personal life is sacrificed to the exigencies of nature and humanity; just as the Egyptian tyrant made slaves of the Israelites, and compelled them to build the pyramids, so we are simply tools in the hands of necessity, building strange structures which at last are sepulchres. Now, in opposition to this, the Apostle declares that 'life is ours'—that is, everything which comes within the designation and scope of life, whatever of circumstance, opportunity, excitement, duty, pleasure, fellowship, are for our enrichment and perfecting. All is to serve us in the fullest and highest sense—to bring our nature to a glorious completeness, to secure us a blessed satisfaction. All things are for our sakes—work, leisure, friendship, wealth, want, health, sickness, joy, sorrow, all the ten thousand variegated things, relationships, movements, experiences of the changing years. Life is our servant, a servant with a hundred hands, enriching us with measureless gifts and blessings.

But life thus becomes ours only as we live in the power of Christ's truth and grace. Christ liberates us from the bondage of the outside world; this is included in the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes free. He teaches us that the whole world of circumstance is for the discipline and the enrichment of the redeemed, and He gives us that organic vitality and force by virtue of which we constrain circumstance

to the building up of character. Science is man asserting his liberty as against nature, not surrendering to storm and flood and fire, but subordinating the elements to his personal convenience and aggrandisement. History is man asserting his liberty as against the despotism of climate, situation, and material fortune, as against the brute force of society, and in the sovereignty of the soul subordinating whatever happens to the glory and enjoyment of the nation and the race. And so Christian life is man asserting his personal liberty as against hereditary influences and current circumstances, and using these in such a way that they build up his character in the full power and beauty of righteousness. Man apart from Christ is too often the manifest creature of circumstances, altogether taking his shape and colour from them, and that not the best shape and colour—success inflates him; failure crushes him; plenty makes him proud and selfish; want makes him servile; leisure makes him slothful; pressure fretful and complaining; health makes him shallow; sickness bitter; darkness makes a worm of him; and sunshine a butterfly. But in the knowledge and strength of Christ we are freed from the bondage of circumstance, life becomes ours, and we use the manifold events and circumstances of the outer world towards the attainment of that ideal moral perfection which is the mark of the prize of our high calling. Amid the multiplied and complicated changes of the outer life we select and reject, accept and resist,

suppress and encourage, fight and fly, act or wait, so that each day, each hour, works in us a deeper, truer, nobler spirit. The grand service of Jesus Christ to us in this matter is, He instructs us how to use the outer life for the inner life, and He so strengthens us that we constantly subordinate the outer life to the training and perfection of that inner life. 'Life is yours.' You are not the poor vassals of outside forces, you are not sacrificed to the type, you are not insignificant as the coral worm which builds the reef and perishes in the depths, you are free to use the world, and to be served by it in the very largest and grandest sense. The bee does not find honey in every flower, nor the diver a gem in every shell, but in Christ all things are yours, and every emotion within, every action and circumstance without, shall strengthen and refine.

II. We maintain that life is ours as against the *Pessimist*. The pessimist holds that life is not ours at all, it is our foe, our bitter, unrelenting foe—to live is a misfortune, a curse, a woe. Many of our philosophers boldly maintain this view. Life is fundamentally vain and vicious, and it is the curse that makes all other curses possible. In their view it is little matter whether you are rich or poor; life is weeping; the rich man wipes his eyes with a silk handkerchief, the poor man with a cotton handkerchief, and it doesn't much matter. It is little matter in what you spend your life, for at last life is nothing 'but buttoning and unbuttoning.' It is little matter

whether you are wise or ignorant; perhaps it is better to be ignorant, since he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. And many secularists who have not adopted pessimism as a creed have been practical pessimists—they have felt life to be only emptiness, weariness, and despair. Froude writes of Carlyle, 'Every day he told me he was weary of life, and spoke wistfully of the old Roman method. Increasing weakness only partially tamed him into patience, or reconciled him to an existence which, even at its best, he had more despised than valued.'* John S. Mill—speaking of his father, James Mill—writes: 'He thought human life a poor thing at best, after the freshness of youth and of unsatisfied curiosity had gone by. This was a topic on which he did not often speak—especially, it may be supposed, in the presence of young persons; but, when he did, it was with an air of settled and profound conviction. He would sometimes say, that if life were made what it might be, by good government and good education, it would be worth having; but he never spoke with anything like enthusiasm even of that possibility.'† Writing to Mr. Atkinson, Miss Martineau says: 'You will feel at once how earnestly I must be longing for death—I who never loved life, and who would any day of my life have rather departed than stayed. Well! it can hardly go on very well much longer now. But I do

* *Life in London*, vol. ii., p. 452.

† *Autobiography*, p. 48.

wish it was permitted to us to judge for ourselves a little how long we ought to carry on the task which we never desired and could not refuse.'* That is, she wishes that suicide were permitted. 'The world's winter is going, I hope, but my everlasting winter has set in.'† Thus sadly wrote George Eliot.

Now, in opposition to all this, the text declares that in Christ 'life is ours.' The New Testament everywhere holds human life as a precious thing. Christ says in regard to one man that it would have been better if he had never been born, but He never says this in regard to man as such. He assumed life to be a priceless boon, to be carefully watched and nourished and developed to glorious issues. And this was the view of the Apostles—they all accept life with gratitude, they never dream of letting it go. According to them man was not made to mourn, but to find sublime and endless satisfaction. Not that Christianity fails to recognise the sad element in human life. The auctioneer selling a mansion assured his audience that the only drawbacks to it were the songs of the nightingales and the litter of the rose-leaves, and there is a slip-shod easy-going optimism which speaks of this world in a similar fashion. But Christianity never makes this mistake—it fully recognises all the difficulty, suffering, and woe of human life. Yet, in face of a groaning and wailing creation,

* Mrs. Miller: *Harriet Martineau.*

† *Life and Letters.*

it maintains that life is the crowning benediction, to be prized by us all, to be held fast with gratitude and wonder and hope. And living in Christ we prove that life is a blessing. Christ makes man to rejoice in life by discovering a great purpose in it. The bees have a great urgent purpose, the birds, the butterflies; that consuming purpose makes their life an ecstasy; and if we are to enjoy life we must have a distinct and lofty end to live for. Christ discovers that purpose; the grand end of life is the perfection of our immortal spirit, through the love of God and the keeping of His commandments. Here is something to live for. Christ makes men to rejoice in life by putting a great strength into it. 'I can do all things through Christ, Who strengtheneth me.' Christ makes men to rejoice in life by putting a great love into it. The great curse of life is egotism, selfishness. If our pessimists would only leave their selfish moonings and lay themselves out to help and bless all who are about them as opportunity might serve, it would soon change their philosophy. There is nothing like noble, disinterested work on behalf of suffering humanity to cure morbid brains, and to fill a man's life with the sense of health and joy and hope. Christ makes men to rejoice in life by putting a great hope into it. 'For which cause we faint not.' My brother, you who are weary of life, feeling it utterly mysterious and insufferably sad, draw near to Christ. He has the secret of living. 'As the living Father

has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.' Assimilate Christ, drink in His spirit, live upon His great truths, join in His grand work of mercy and help, and you shall rejoice with our poet—

> 'No more forsaken and forlorn,
> I bless the day that I was born.'

III. We maintain that life is ours as against the *Sensualist*. There is an idea abroad that life belongs to the man who lives to the end of self-indulgence—who eats, drinks, and is merry. To see the world of animal indulgence is spoken of as 'seeing life.' One following a course of licence is said to be 'fond of life.' Such life is called 'fast life,' 'gay life.' I can imagine the man of wordly animal indulgence addressing the Christian: 'Surely you have some advantage now, you have also great expectations beyond, but surely this life here and now is ours.' This, brethren, we altogether deny. Life, here and now, is ours—it is our inheritance who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. A man who merely lives on the carnal side misses the real depth and fulness of life. You may say that the Greenlander is alive, and that he enjoys life. He crouches in his dark hut, lies with his dogs, eats his blubber, drinks his oil, smokes his pipe, sleeps and sleeps again. This is life, but what a different thing from the life of Europe, from the life teeming with sensibility, that

knows books, gardens, science, art, the manifold excitements and pleasures of civilised life! And the spiritual life of man goes still beyond. He has faculties that bring the unseen and eternal within the range of his vision. He has spiritual imagination enabling him to know and exult in the infinitely true and beautiful. We are full of yearnings for the unknown, of aspirations and yearnings for the Divine. Now, the man who knows not this life, knows not the true life of man—living for meat and drink and raiment, he is dead while he liveth. He is as really out of life in the noblest sense as the coarse Greenlander is. To be carnally minded is death—the death even now of the finer faculties of the living soul.

Christ enables us to realise life in all its fulness. The life of the senses is ours in Christ. He is 'the Lord of the body,' and as we live to Him the sensational life becomes ours. The very restraint and moderation which the Christian creed imposes on all material enjoyment only puts us in fuller possession of that enjoyment. We lose our life to find it. Christ leaves us free to expatiate through the whole intellectual world. And, most of all, He brings out that divine nature of ours in which we most truly and gloriously live. He who is most alive to-day is he whose action is directed by the highest considerations, whose breast is warmest with love, who is full of holy thought, whose heart throbs true to God, whose pulse beats quick and true to man, whose hands are full of

gracious work, whose faith and hope seizing on the glorious future fill the present moment with power and rapture—this is truly to live, and such is the life of him whose life is hid with Christ in God. Man is full of great capabilities and possibilities, and Christ has a wonderful power of ascertaining these, evoking these, fulfilling these. As the summer shines on the landscape, and brings green leaves out of the barren stems, full flowers from the sleeping bulbs, singing birds from the silent woods, a world of sweet smells and bright colours and rich music, so Christ acts upon human nature, realising its instincts, its faculties, its powers, making it to blossom as the rose, to stretch its wings like the eagle, to thrill with joyous feeling as the harp with many strings. Our modern poet tells that 'more life and fuller' is what we most need. Surely we find this in Christ. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly, and he who lives in Christ and by Christ feels in the pleasures of the senses, in the glow of the feelings, in the vision of the intellect, in the rapture of the spirit that life is his. As the New Version puts it, they who live in Christ and live for eternity 'lay hold on the life which is life indeed.'

IV. We maintain that life is ours as against the *Ascetic*. The ascetic is the man within the Church who denies to the Christian the pleasures of life; he considers that the more meagre, starved, and sad our life is, the safer and better it is, and the nearer to the

true ideal. A gentleman in Manchester told me the other day that he was brought up in Scotland, and that when he was a boy he dare not attempt to sing his little joyous hymns on a Sunday; if his friends had heard him he would very likely have been chastised, and as he felt he must sing somewhere he went into the fields and hills to sing where the birds sang and the brooks made music. The good people felt that anything like joy and gladness was foreign to the sacred day. This is a mistake we often make, and look suspiciously on mirth and holiday. Brethren, let us remember that in Christ 'life is ours'—all good things, all bright things, all glad things.

And life shall be ever brighter with us to the perfect day. Amiel spoke of human life as 'an apprenticeship to a progressive renunciation.' There is a truth undoubtedly in this special view. We are constantly putting off something. As the years go one renunciation follows another, we are compelled to renounce gifts, pleasures, prospects very dear to us for many reasons, until at last we are bare indeed and altogether disillusionised. But the whole truth is not in this statement. True life implies constant renunciation, but it implies also constant acquisition. We do not so much put away joy and gladness, as we keep changing one joy for a higher, one glory for a fuller, one gift for a more excellent gift. Christ expressed the whole truth when He said, 'He that loseth his life shall find it.' Christian life often

involves self-denial; but every act of renunciation is followed by the acquisition of a strength and treasure, a beauty and blessedness, altogether more deep and precious. He who lives in Christ knows a life full and glad and incorruptible. Oh, brethren! many have old withered hearts who have not old faces. The crow-feet, the wrinkles, the dim eyes, the tear tracks, the scars, the seams are within, and such men and women have little freshness or joyfulness in life. Christ can make us all young, and fill our branches with the dew of youth. 'He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.'

IV.

CHRIST AND DEATH.

"For all things are yours: . . . death . . . is yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."—1 Cor. iii. 21-3.

OUR subject this morning, brethren, seems somewhat inappropriate. Here in the midst of the great city, full of life—life vivid, intense, resolute, hopeful; life everywhere flowing in full unresting tide—it seems somewhat out of place and season to dwell on darkness, decay, silence, oblivion. And, to tell the truth, at the first notice the mention of death in the text itself seems inappropriate; it sounds like a false note in the vast music of the Apostle's triumphal strain. But in the midst of life we are in death, and it will do us no harm to pause a moment to look on the shadow which rests on all our life and splendour. And we shall soon find that the Apostle made no mistake in including death in the inventory of our effects. Death is not our spoiler, but our servant. It ministers to us as Paul, Apollos, Cephas; nay, of all teachers it shall teach us the most. It ministers to us as the world does; nay, it makes the larger universe

ours. It ministers to us as life does ; nay, it unfolds to us the fulness of life.

I. Christ makes death ours *as He gives us assurance of the life beyond.* If we consider death with the eye of the materialist we feel that we are death's. We are delivered helplessly into its cruel hands, and it strips us of everything ; it puts us out of correspondence with everything ; at one fell swoop it takes away society, body, world, sun, moon, stars, everything. It peels us and lays us in the dust. Looked at simply by the carnal eye, the last enemy is an enemy indeed, violently stripping us of our wonderful possessions, and shutting out the grand universe with the churchyard wall. But Christ makes death ours by giving us the assurance of immortality, that is, the assurance of a full perennial life beyond. Let us look, then, at the special influence of Christ on the human hope of immortality.

Men have an *instinct* of immortality. This can hardly be denied. It has been found in the lowest savages, and in the most intellectual races ; it revealed itself in the nations of antiquity, and it prevails in the modern world, not only within the limits of Christendom, but beyond. However men may explain this instinctive sense of immortality, whatever degree of validity they may attach to it, its existence can hardly be denied. If there be one characteristic common to the race, after all exceptions have been fully allowed for, it is to be found in that prophetic

sense which suggests to us a life beyond the grave. Very strange, diversified, grotesque even, are the manifestations of this instinct, but that it exists in the human heart is beyond question. And this instinct we are bound to respect. Mr. Darwin, referring to the grand intimations of the human mind, makes this observation : 'But then arises the doubt, Can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animal, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions?'* Now, as I have pointed out elsewhere, Mr. Darwin here does his own theory injustice. Are not the instincts of the lower creatures on the whole marvellously correct? The instinct of the bird of passage does not deceive it in its vast strange migrations. The instinct of the bee does not fail it in the elaboration of its cell, in the gathering of its honey, and in many other ways altogether wonderful. The instincts of the butterfly and beetle are not at fault when by a strange prescience they prepare the cradle and food of their offspring, whom they shall never see. And, may we not ask with confidence, if the instinct of the caterpillar pointing to the butterfly, if the instinct of the swallow discerning far beyond the sea a land of sunshine and flowers, if these instincts prove no mockery, why should the instincts of human nature, pointing to a grand perfection in a world above and beyond, prove

* *Life*, vol. i., p. 312.

untrustworthy? If instinct prove reliable within a narrower area and on lower grounds, why should we not trust it on higher grounds and within vaster horizons? Surely modern science has done nothing to discredit the general trustworthiness of instinct, and we have, in the light of science, no reason to suspect the highest instincts of all, which point to God and to immortality.

And *reason* has a powerful verdict to give on this question of our immortality. Now, just take the views of several sceptical or unorthodox philosophers on this question of immortality, and you will see that they cannot do without this great doctrine. Take this from George Sand: 'No, the conclusion of Renan and Littré is not sufficient. Resurrection in posterity through glory is not so disinterested an idea as they declare it to be. Their device is fine enough: "To work without the hope of a reward; the reward being the very good which we do." Yes, under the condition that we shall always be able to do it and to eternally recommence it; to do good during half-a-century is to be content with too little, with a duty too quickly performed. Besides, the spectacle and sense of what is true and beautiful is too extensive for a single life to be sufficient for contemplating and enjoying them. That deficiency of proportion would be for us an inadmissible want of equilibrium.'* So the eloquent sceptic felt that

* *Letters*, vol. ii., p. 350.

without immortality there is a painful 'deficiency of proportion.' Take this from Mr. Darwin: 'With respect to immortality, nothing shows me so clearly how strong and almost instinctive a belief it is, as the consideration of the view now held by most physicists—namely, that the sun with all the planets will in time grow too cold for life, unless, indeed, some great body dashes into the sun, and thus gives it fresh life. Believing as I do that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress. To those who fully admit the immortality of the human soul, the destruction of our world will not appear so dreadful.'* So that the hesitating scientist feels it 'an intolerable thought' that after such long-continued and costly progress we should all be annihilated. And, speaking as a philosopher, Edgar Quinet testifies: 'The individual pursues his career to perfection more rapidly than humanity. What it takes ages to attain he arrives at in a few years, it may be in a single day. But a time comes when he dies, and humanity still lives on, reaching stages of development beyond those given to the individual. Has the law of development ceased for the individual? Is his tie with the race severed? Does one being go on alone while the other has ceased to be? No,

* *Life*, vol. i., p. 312.

infinite God; I cannot believe it. I conclude that, whilst the human race pursues on earth its career of perfection, the individual continues its parallel march in some place and in some form already prepared for it by Providence.'* And many such passages might be quoted from mere philosophers showing their sense of the validity of the doctrine of a personal immortality.

But, my brethren, whilst human instinct and reason thus declare for immortality, the subject at last is left in deep uncertainty. Whilst we listen to human reasoning and testimony we feel that it may be illogical, fanciful, mistaken, we may be the dupes of our imagination, it may be nothing more than guess-work and illusion, all is vague, confused, unsatisfying. But when Christ comes all is changed. He makes eternity a fact; He looks, He breathes immortality. You cannot come into contact with Him without tasting the powers of the world to come, and feeling the eternal hope awake in your soul. He brought life and immortality to light. We pass from dubious twilight to clear day, to knowledge, assurance, hope. It is the same change that we witness when we see alchemy changed into chemistry, when we see astrology changed into astronomy; a vague, wavering, visionary speculation passes into a definite, demonstrated, fruitful science. In Christ the dream becomes a reality, the inference a certainty, the desire

* *Early Life and Writings*, p. 79.

knowledge and experience. In Christ at last the race attains the clear consciousness of its high nature and its vast destiny. Ever since He lived with us the great hope has been a great conviction, working mightily to the comfort, the strengthening, the purification of Christendom. 'Death is ours.' Says our poet :—

> 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant.
> Oh ! life, not death, for that we pant,
> More life and fuller, that we want.'

But Christ has shown us that through death we find more life and fuller, even length of days for ever and ever.

II. Christ makes death ours, *as He gives us fitness for the life beyond.* We are sometimes disposed to consider the question of immortality as altogether an intellectual one ; we think if we can only succeed in establishing this great hope on logical grounds, that we have nothing more to do than to surrender ourselves to the mighty comfort. But this is far from being the case. The moral element enters very largely into it, and demands consideration in philosophy as it persists to assert itself in experience. The question of a glorious immortality is largely a question of conscience, and it is only as Christ gives us peace that our hope is full, our victory complete. It is conscience that makes death terrible, the unknown world so dark and dreadful. Let us take two passages from Scripture which prove this. In this very Epistle

we have the famous passage which goes to the depth of the thing: 'The sting of death is sin.' Death may be, and is, objectionable to us for various natural reasons. We shrink from being unclothed. Life is such a splendid gift that we cannot look into the abyss of unconsciousness without a shudder; we cannot pass into the darkness and chill of a passing eclipse without pathetic solicitude. But the *sting* of death is sin—therein lies the deathliness of death. Without sin we might view death with the uneasiness with which we might suppose a caterpillar to view a chrysalis; but a wounded conscience brings in another element, and we shrink from death with sore amazement. Again, we have a passage full of illumination in the Hebrews: 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage;'—'him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Here is the same truth that we found in the first passage—namely, that transgression, guilt, judgment, retribution constitute the essence of death. Behind death stands the devil—that is, the elements of disobedience, guilt, condemnation, punishment constitute the power and terror of death. If it had not been for sin we should have feared death only as a young bird fears to try its wings, but we

fear death now as the bird fears the barbed arrow which drinks up its life.

It is very easy for us to see what a vast difference is made in our estimate of death whether we bring in or leave out the idea of guilt. Look at the death of a malefactor. How truly repulsive and terrible is death in such a case in all its circumstances! The condemned man is suffering the penalty of the broken law, and you are compelled to think of injustice, cruelty, passion, lust, vengeance, falsehood. Everything about the execution is unspeakably coarse, humiliating, horrible. The prison-house is dark, the executioner ghastly, and you are glad indeed to get the block, the gibbet, the guillotine out of sight. Your flesh creeps, your blood runs cold, you are sick at heart with the dreary spectacle. And the stark flowerless graves of malefactors send through you a thrill of horror. Consider, on the other hand, the death of a martyr. Here the material adjuncts are pretty much the same as they are when the sentence of the law is executed on a robber or murderer, and the physical suffering is just as terrible, perhaps worse. It is the same black prison, the same sinister engine of death, the same executioner. But oh, how different is the effect of the whole spectacle upon us who look on, as well as upon the sufferer himself! Another order of ideas is prevalent here. The martyr reminds you of truth, justice, honour, innocence, loyalty, patriotism, faith, purity, and all sense of

horror is gone—it is not an execution; it is a triumph, a bridal, a coronation. The prison gates are as palace gates; gaolers and hangmen are dressed in royal liveries; the cross, the block, the gibbet, the guillotine are sacred things as thrones and altars; the sharp red blade of the executioner melts into the soft golden sickle with which the angel-reaper gathers some crowning sheaf. The very same spectacle of death is a horror or a triumph according as you bring into it the idea of guilt or innocence, of infamy or glory. It is the sense of sin that renders death all that black and bitter thing which we know it to be. 'Death entered the world by sin.' And the consciousness of sin, the voice of conscience, makes death an enemy, the last enemy, most feared of all. Because we are children of disobedience we are all our lifetime in bondage to the fear of death; we are debtors, there is an execution out against us for arrest, and we are always trembling lest the bony policeman should lay his cold grip upon us, saying, 'You are *my* prisoner,' and so shut us up in the prison till we have paid that uttermost farthing we never can pay.

Here once again Christ makes death ours. He changes death for us from the death of a malefactor to the death of a martyr. He takes away the guilt and power of sin. He satisfies the conscience as He does the intellect. He gives to all those who trust in Him the sense of forgiveness and peace. And as He gives peace to the conscience He gives purity and life

to the whole personality. We are afraid of physical death, but really the worse death is within—the death of our higher nature. The death of conscience, the death of will, the death of love, the death of faith, the death of hope, this is the most awful fact of death. But here Jesus Christ becomes the Resurrection and the Life, freeing us from the death of sin, awaking in us the life of righteousness, and so making us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Sin made us death's slaves, made us death's prisoners, and so crushed us into dust and despair; but we are now free from sin, in Christ we have peace and purity, through death He has destroyed him that had the power of death. 'Thanks be unto God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

'Fear not; . . . I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and the grave.' Hear your Redeemer and King. Believe in Him in the prospect of death. He shall fix the hour. Trust Him in the article of death. You shall not 'see,' you shall not 'taste' death. Christ, so far as we gather from the New Testament, never saw anyone die; I do not believe that Lazarus or that anyone else could have died in His presence; death cannot come where Christ is. Let Christ then be with you in your last hour, and death shall not be; it shall be swallowed up in victory. 'If this be death,' said John Hunt, 'then,

praise the Lord!' Trust in Christ for full resurrection and immortality. You say, 'It is full of mystery and difficulty—this rising from the dead.' It is. But you see the corn of wheat die to live again; you see the caterpillar come through a shroud of glory. 'Ah, yes!' you say, 'but we know all about that, we quite understand that, we have seen it a thousand times.' Brethren, we don't understand it, we don't know all about a thing because we have seen it a thousand times; it is a great mystery, and if God can work such marvellous changes and glorifications in seeds and worms, what transfigurations may not be possible for us, the highest creatures of all! 'He shall change this vile body, and make it like unto His own glorious body.' Believe in Him when you lose your dear friends. I don't mean those who are looking after 'fashionable mourning,' there isn't much the matter with them; but, broken-hearted mourner, be sure Christ will not forget your jewels in the dust. Believe in Him for yourself, and death shall prove but the white funeral of your lower life—the blinking of an eyelid, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.

V.

CHRIST AND THE PRESENT.

'For all things are yours: . . . things present . . . are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.'—1 Cor. iii. 21-3.

THAT things above, that things beyond, may belong to the Christian is well understood, the sceptic with a smile will allow this; but that 'things present' are ours in Christ is not so well understood. Our purpose this morning, then, is to show that whatever inheritance is ours above and beyond, things here and now are ours if we are Christ's.

We observe, then,

I. *That the faith of Christ secures to us 'things present.'* It is a common complaint of secularism against Christianity that the natural tendency of supernatural religion is to withdraw our attention from the immediate practical world, and to waste our time and powers on mere figments of the imagination; such a life of abstraction and devotion means the impoverishment of this worldly human life. And it is a very common thing for secular writers to point to the mediæval age for the illustration and demon-

stration of their position. During that age, it is alleged, the most precious things we possess—time, thought, feeling—were refused to the realities of the world, and lavished on imaginary beings and things. Human affections, human sympathy and compassion, human thought and aspiration, were wasted on religious systems which did nothing to fertilise the world. The consequence of this was that art, poetry, science, life, were starved and sickly. The study of the unknowable things of heaven prevented the study of the knowable things of earth. Then, again, the love of God and Christ withdrew attention and pity from human souls, from the earthly wrongs and woes of men, so that all society suffered. And not only was there the starving of art and artistic instincts, social sterility and stagnation, but the individual soul was starved also and palsied. This was the consequence of looking at things above; they missed, they sterilised, they sacrificed things present; and civilisation was saved only by the Renaissance calling man's energies of thought and feeling from the unknowable to the knowable, from heaven to earth.*

Now, whatever truth there may be in this secularistic interpretation of history, it is, from the Christian standpoint, capable of a satisfactory reply. First, we appeal from a corrupt to a pure Christianity. That the Christianity of the mediæval period was corrupt, that in many points it fatally misconceived

* *Euphorion*: vol. ii., p. 233.

the faith of Christ, will be generally allowed; and this corruption of Christianity worked great practical mischief then, as a similar Christianity does now. But does this invalidate the Christianity of the New Testament? Think, brethren, of the charges that might easily and truthfully be urged against astrology. That was indeed a system of barren star-gazing. It took the attention of men away from the earth without any direct or indirect terrestrial advantage. It was a waste of time, thought, and feeling. But will anyone to-day bring such charges against astronomy? Surely none would compare the telescope and spectroscope of the modern astronomer with the magic mirror of the astrologer, or the positive science of astronomy with the obscure divinations and horoscopes of astrology. Astronomy concerns itself with the distant sun, the most distant stars, with flashing comets and auroral lights, but the science of the firmament is a most fruitful one in regard to our present immediate worldly interests. And so, brethren, if in the middle ages a corrupt theology and ecclesiasticism worked badly, wasting human thought and energy and wealth, that is no argument against the Christianity of Jesus Christ. The New Testament never separates earth from heaven. It brings before us, in God and Christ and heaven, great ideals which are to vivify, to enrich, to realise, to exalt, to perfect, all earthly things. Men talk of the unworldliness of Christianity, but it recognises the dignity and rights of the body, it

assigns us all the wealth of nature, it leaves us free to work out our intellectual faculty, it gives its Divine sanction to all the articulations of human society. And the knowledge of God, the love of Christ, the hope of heaven, are not to impoverish men, but to bring us inspiration and strength, so that we may inherit the earth. As astronomy for no idle purpose lifts our eyes to the stars, so theology for no idle purpose lifts our eyes to Him Who has set His glory above the heavens. Men talk of the narrowness of Christianity, but it is wide enough for all present things so far as those things are rational and useful. If there ever was a grand protest against narrowness it is the protest of the text—against narrowness of all kinds. Christianity is wide enough for all muscularities; it shuts out Roman amphitheatres and modern prize-rings, but thank God for the narrowness that shuts out brutality and blood. Christianity is wide enough for all art; it shuts out Pompeian chambers of obscenity, but thank God for the narrowness that shuts out beastliness and ghastliness. Christianity is wide enough for love and friendship and home life; it shuts out Venus's temple and Mohammed's harem, but thank God for the narrowness that shuts out the degradation of women. Christianity is wide enough for all true commerce, wealth, pleasure; it warns us against covetousness, licentiousness, materialism, but thank God for the narrowness that prevents our taking

the big barn of Dives for the supreme goal of life.

And we appeal from the mediæval world to the modern world in which we live. Ours is a Christian nation, and the state of things amongst us to-day is just as much the outcome of the Christian faith as was the mediæval world the outcome of a perverted Christian faith. And surely no civilisation was ever richer than our own. The historian reminds us that the development of national energies in antiquity was of a one-sided character. But the development of our national energies has no one-sided character. Who loves literature more than we do? Have we not a passion for music? Who admires nature more than we do? Are not all things of beauty prized by us? Do we not travel over the world? Is not our science most advanced? Who can rival our commerce? Will anyone accuse us of being indifferent to wealth, to pleasure, to greatness, to life? Whatever a few dilettante critics may say, the faith of Christ has filled us with energy, and that energy has found manifold and magnificent manifestations in the things present, in the life which now is. And, brethren, do you find that the faith of Christ gives men about you a distaste for practical life, that it makes them unsuccessful in practical life? Look at religious men, are they indifferent to the world in any sense? I know that there are places and occasions where and when a noble-minded spiritual man will show to

momentary disadvantage when compared with the sordid, smart man of the world. The Chinese have a proverb, 'The phœnix is not so good at roosting as a chicken.' The bird of heaven, the bird of immortality, is in some things beaten by a barn-door fowl. That is—very inferior people may in some matters excel their superiors. And so a sordid worldling may in some things and for a while outshine the saint. But, on the whole, the saints are very fair roosters, and in any of our cities you will find the Christian merchant taking high rank with his peers. Look also at our religious newspapers, and tell me if Christianity unfits men for the practical life. On the same sheet you will see piety and pills, morality and mustard, salvation and soap. Can anyone justly say that the Church is indifferent to the nimble ninepence? Ah! brethren, we are hardly wanting here. 'Things present are ours.' We know it, and carrying out the truths and principles and spirit of the Gospel, it follows that we share the riches of time. 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' and all is yours, for 'ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

II. *That the faith of Christ makes 'things present' ours with truest and fullest propriety.*

(i) In Christ we have the *richest enjoyment* of things present. The materialism of our time is said to be its most conspicuous characteristic, the pursuit of wealth absorbing nine-tenths of available human energy. But things are not ours when they are ours legally,

conventionally—they are ours only when we so realise them that they rejoice our heart. The material wealth about us does not necessarily satisfy us. No swift social or material progress will make us happy. The Wandering Jew would be no happier with a steam leg. It is easy to have riches, honour, power, amusement, and yet not have the power to eat thereof. Some of our writers maintain that it is in miserable, hopeless, and oppressed conditions that the deepest need is felt for religious truth and consolation; and they affirm that as man ceases to be miserable and oppressed, so the need for religion will cease, it will be ignored as a superfluous thing. But this is far from being the case. Men never feel the need of religion more than they do in health, wealth, abundance, liberty, greatness, splendour. They are never more deeply, bitterly, mysteriously miserable than they are when they have everything their soul desireth. Look at Germany to-day, brilliant in genius, victorious in arms, flushed with power and success, and yet cankered with the philosophy of despair. And we are constant witnesses how successful opulent men are wearied of life; satiated and disgusted amid all their splendour, they remind one of bees drowning in their own honey. The fact is, you can only realise the joy of things present in the light of the Infinite, in the light of God's presence, in the power of His blessing. When the beautiful orb comes between the sun and the earth it is no longer beautiful: that moment all its brightness

is gone, it is an inky blot on the heavens. And so, dear brethren, all beautiful things in human life lose their beauty and become dark and disappointing the moment they come between us and God. It is only in the light of God that life shines, only in His blessing that it is rich. The most precious gift is a tormenting, tantalising thing if you take it away from the religious element and consecration. 'Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.' In Christ we have the knowledge of God, the sense of His presence and love, His blessing, which maketh rich and addeth thereunto no sorrow. In the purity and peace and spirituality which Christ gives we are enabled to eat what Providence gives us, to find sweetness and satisfaction in all the banquet of life.

(ii) In Christ we have the *fullest profit* of things present. A life of material interest, a life of material success, considered in itself, is no advantage in any sense. Maudsley, who has no bias to religion certainly, observes: 'There is no more efficient cause of mental degeneracy than the mean and vulgar life of a tradesman, whose soul is entirely taken up with petty gains, who, under the sanction of the customs of the trade, practises systematic fraud and theft. The deterioration of nature which he has acquired will, unless a healthier family influence serve to counteract it, be transmitted as a family heritage to his children, and may result in some form of moral or intellectual deficiency, perhaps

in outbreaks of positive insanity.'* Now, here it is recognised that the mean and vulgar life of a tradesman whose soul is taken up with petty gains will result in the deterioration of his own nature and that of his offspring, in some form of moral or intellectual deficiency, perhaps ultimately in insanity. Here, then, the religion of materialism and material success is nothing very grand. Now, what is to save a man from this deterioration? What is to prevent his mean and vulgar life demoralising him utterly? Romances from the library? Politics? Popular amusements? The theatre? The daily newspaper? Surely not. Great thoughts, great principles, great hopes,—these will lift the soul of the tradesman; these will save his soul from dwarfing influences; and these ideas, these ideals, these noble principles and aims, are to be found only in religion. Christ makes things present ours by making them means and instruments of our higher education. The tradesman who walks with Christ is no longer let down by a mean and vulgar life. Life to such a man is no longer mean and vulgar, it is a school for a Divine training, and the scholar is ever taking higher intellectual and moral degrees. The large ideas, sentiments, standards, aspirations of Christian faith and hope work like leaven hour by hour, refining, uplifting, strengthening, perfecting, until the tradesman becomes a perfect man; instead of sinking to Bedlam, he rises to Paradise. Christ makes

* Quoted by Nisbet: *Marriage and Heredity*, p. 117.

things present ours by turning them into stepping-stones on which we rise to the highest levels of moral culture—to the table-lands of which God Himself is sun and moon.

In this day we are told much about impressionism, about making the best of the present moment. It is said that man has always one foot in the past, the other in the future, and that he misses altogether the flowers and fruits, the delights and treasures, of the present. And they bid us no longer to look high and wide, before and after, but to concentrate ourselves on the immediate things present, and so make the best of things here, whatever may be the future.

'Live out your whole free life while yet on earth ;
Seize the quick Present, prize your one sure boon ;
Though brief, each day a golden sun has birth ;
Though dim, the night is gemmed with stars and moon.'

Brethren, there is no vivid, full realisation of the moment except as we realise immortality in the moment ; he who tastes the power of the present must taste the powers of the world to come. Without the eternal rock the flower would have no grace, without the ancient sea the foam no splendour, without the background of the pillared firmament the rainbow would miss its magic ; and life is flat and stale except we realise in it the sentiment of eternity. In Christ things present are ours because things to come are ours. Present joy is ours in all its depth

and preciousness; and these 'light afflictions, which are but for a moment,' are ours also. 'Whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

VI.

CHRIST AND THE FUTURE.

'For all things are yours : . . . things to come . . . are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's.'—1 Cor. iii. 21-3.

THE future here must, of course, be taken in the very widest and most general sense—the future of this world and of all unknown worlds into which this life may open. Christ makes us heirs of the future ; as we are found in Him we shall inherit all the wealth and blessedness of the ages beyond. Let us distribute our reflections on this great theme under two heads.

I. *Humanity has a grand future.* 'Things to come.' We feel to-day that our race has great possibilities, that it has great expectations, not to be denied. We very vaguely discern 'things to come,' but we feel strangely sure of their reality and grandeur. Columbus may not be able to convince gainsayers, but he is none the less satisfied of the fact and glory of worlds not seen as yet. Consider,

(i) The possibilities of *nature.* The scoffer speaks of all things continuing as they were from the beginning of the creation, but the scoffer is wrong here, as the

scoffer often is. Things do not continue as they were: they have changed, they are changing, they will change immensely yet, and they may change from all the glory of the present into a glory we hardly dream of. You cannot look into the prophecy of Isaiah, into the argument of Paul, into the vision of John, without a deep feeling of the coming glorification of nature. 'Yes,' you say, 'but is not all this the poetry of ages destitute of science and philosophy? We cannot build much on these dreamings of prophets and apostles.' Very well, then, let me bring you from the ancient to the modern world, from the old poet to the scientist of to-day. In his recent work on the *Geological History of Plants*, Sir J. W. Dawson writes: 'We must now be prepared to admit that an Eden can be planted even in Spitzbergen; that there are possibilities in this old earth of ours which its present condition does not reveal to us; that the present state of the world is by no means the best possible in relation to climate and vegetation; that there have been and might be again conditions which would convert the ice-clad arctic regions into blooming paradises, and which, at the same time, would moderate the fervent heat of the tropics. We are accustomed to say that nothing is impossible with God; but how little have we known of the gigantic possibilities which lie hidden under some of the most common of His natural laws!'* Here, then, we have a President of

* Page 257.

the Royal Society asserting that arctic regions may become paradises, and that deserts may bloom as the rose, and all this not through some supernatural, extraordinary intervention ; these gigantic possibilities lie hidden under some of the most common of natural laws. 'How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up, which Thou hast hidden, for them that fear Thee!' Nature is a great storehouse, whose treasures of darkness will in due time be brought into the light. One of our writers speaks of 'the stored and uncounted riches lying hid in all God's creatures,' and as the years roll on these riches are ascertained, to the wonder and joy of mankind. Instead of the world getting narrower, poorer, it is opening out into unsuspected wealth and glory, and scientific men cannot think of the future but they become poets, speaking of things to come with rapture.

(ii) The possibilities of *society*. Who shall say where the perfecting of our physical nature shall end? In one of the reviews for the current month there is an article by a scientific man, in which he speculates as to the probable development of our race in the near future. The coming man is to be tall, and free, and lofty of carriage, having a godlike intelligence of countenance. And the woman of the future is to grow with the ages and through the ages in strength and beauty. Everything points to this body of our humiliation putting on large measures of grace and glory. Who shall say what the intellectual force of the

coming man may be? Emerson speaks of 'the unexplored riches of the human constitution,' and it is delightful to think of the faculties of our nature which are yet so largely undeveloped. Our senses now only take in a bit of the universe, and a larger education of those senses will bring into ken new continents of wonder and wealth. Some men talk as if things were exhausted, and as if there could be no more great art, or poetry, or literature; but it is a mere infatuation to speak thus. We in the nineteenth century are wonderful people, but in a century or two more we shall appear to our posterity mere barbarians. Who shall say what the social perfection of the future shall be? The Book of the Revelation has proved a stumbling-block to many. They cannot understand its city of gold, its great multitude in white raiment, its eternal light and music. It sets forth a state of moral and social perfection and blessedness, following ages of disorganisation and misery, which seems altogether visionary and poetic. But George Lewes reminds us that Comte's system has *its* Apocalypse. It has; it predicts ages in which society is to realise a unity and plenty, a blessedness and progress, quite as transcendental as anything in the foreshadowings of Isaiah or John. The Apocalypse of secularism is as full of wonderful things touching a glorified humanity as John's cities of gold, with their holy nations, their crowned harpers and priests. So all parties are full of expectations of progress

—saints, scientists, socialists, are looking for ages of gold.

Men are always asking for finality, but there is no finality, not in science, politics, learning, social life, or in anything else. We move from evil to good, from good to better, from better to better still. Some while ago a representative of the Board of Trade stated that they were not without a hope that a limit might now be reached, in which the lighthouse authorities might agree, as being the limit of illumination beyond which no practical advantage could result to the navigator. Dr. Tyndall was very angry with this attempt to fix the 'limit of illumination.' Yes, indeed, you must not attempt in any direction to fix the limit of illumination—it is against the whole genius of the age. Every new discovery fills us with wonder and delight, and we are prone to stay with it, to rest in it, as if it were the ultimate glory; but God keeps saying to us, 'Thou shalt see greater things than these.' They tell a story in York that an American visitor was one day seen examining with much interest and delight one of the many ancient structures with which the city abounds, when an inhabitant asked him what he was about. Said the visitor, 'I am looking at your cathedral.' 'Our cathedral! I will show you our cathedral,' said the townsman, pointing out in the distance the massive shrine towering in all its grandeur to the heaven. And so we are always stopping to clap our hands at some fine discovery or invention, as if it

were the final goal, when God once more moves us on, showing us in the distance some grander reality. So we have hope of 'things to come.' Some men talk of the world finishing; it is but commencing. This is but the first stage of our existence, and new earths and new heavens open on our sight.

II. *The grand future of humanity will be realised in Christ.* This is the distinct teaching of the Scriptures. The Old Testament teaches that in Messiah the world, the ages, will become the possession of the faithful, and the New Testament more clearly and emphatically insists on the same truth. In the Hebrews we are taught that Christ is Heir of all things, and that He brings many sons to share His glory. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle declares in the Ephesians, hath set Christ at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. And the Epistle to the Romans teaches the same: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' Such is the representation of the Scriptures. Christ is the Heir, the Lord of the

future. And when we come to consider these wonderful predictions of Messiah's glory and kingdom in the light of to-day, they seem altogether rational and probable. The progress of the race is manifestly progress in Christ, and to Christ and to all those who are in Him belong the ages to come. Let us see.

(i) It is only in *godliness* that there is progress. Religion, that which teaches the existence of God, our dependence upon God, our responsibility before God, religion is essential to national life, expansion, movement, progress. Religion, in setting the living God before us, glorious in holiness, truth, love, righteousness, sets before us a grand inspiring Ideal, which uplifts and sustains, and makes the highest perfection possible. We have only to look to China to find an illustration of the non-progressiveness of an atheistic people. This people do not in so many words deny God, but they agree to leave God as small a place as possible in the ideas and business of mankind—they are practical atheists. They are the rationalists of the East.* And what has been the consequence of their atheistic position? China is the land of stagnation. Ages ago they got hold of grand ideas in domesticity, in sociology, in philosophy, education, science, but they have never developed those ideas. It is the land of arrested development, of fossils, of petrifactions. The people

* Edgar Quinet : *Early Life and Writings*, p. 306.

seem not to breathe, or move, or live. Twenty-two dynasties have successively disappeared, but at the end of all these revolutions everything continues as in the primitive times. The future belongs not to them ; the past is theirs, the dead past. Earth does not grow without heaven, human life does not grow without immortality, man does not grow without God. If you could take religion out of our civilisation, as some desire, Europe would immediately resemble the fabled city in which every person and thing was changed into stone. Without the sense of divinity, infinity, immortality, there is no growth : movement of a kind there may be, but no progress. Now, if godliness be the life of the race, the religion of Christ is the religion of progress, the religion of the future, because it gives us the highest conception of godliness. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' How pure, how beautiful, how majestic is the character of Jesus Christ! Full of love, of pity, of truth, of justice, of wisdom, of hope, we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the nation that has God in Christ for its Ideal. It will ever renew its life. It will ever renew its gladness. It will ever renew its hope. How can it stand still? It must restlessly stretch forth to a higher, purer, more perfect condition. 'Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee,' will be its motto, its evolving force, its strength and glory. The knowledge of the living God is the mainspring

of civilisation, and that knowledge finds its crowning discovery in Jesus Christ.

(ii) It is only in *righteousness* that there is progress. We feel in these days that we are on the eve of great things, of far greater things than the world has yet seen, but we may be sure that these greater things will be vouchsafed to us only in exact proportion to the deepening and perfecting of our moral life. Moral advancement is the condition of all other advancement, and it would be utterly ruinous if our material prosperity outran our moral health. It is 'the glory of God to conceal a thing;' that is, it is an act of goodness on the part of God to withhold a thing until we are fully ready for it. There is certain knowledge that you keep from a child, it would be dangerous for a child to possess it; there is a certain liberty you do not grant a child, it could only abuse it; there are certain instruments you keep away from a child, it uses a spoon until it is fit to be trusted with knives, razors, and swords. So it is with the nations. It would have been absolute ruin to the ancient world to possess knowledge and power possessed by the modern world. It was necessary that there should be a larger moral element in the world, a fuller moral discipline in the race, before we could be trusted with certain knowledge and instruments and forces. If Egypt and Assyria had known the steam-engine, their crushing tyranny would have ground the nations

to powder; if Rome and Macedon had known gunpowder and dynamite and steel guns, surely they would have left the world without inhabitant; if Carthage and Greece and Rome had possessed locomotives, steamships, telegraphs, and all the facilities and forces of modern civilisation, it is terrible to think of the extent to which they would forthwith have corrupted themselves. The knowledge of steam, gunpowder, electricity, and other mighty forces was withheld until the race had attained to greater power of character; and these things were not withheld by some arbitrary decree, but by a natural law which regulates the development of the world in all ages. And so, brethren, God will continue to enrich us as we are morally fit for fuller wealth and dominion. The steam-engine is a barbarism, the steamship, gun-cotton, electrical motors mere toys, compared with the instruments and forces of the future which are laid up in God's storehouses, to be brought forth when the sentiments of justice, truth, and humanity have taken fuller hold of the race. The religion of Christ is the religion of righteousness, it inculcates everywhere justice and love, and just as Christ sets up amongst us the righteousness of God, so shall all other things be added unto us.

(iii) It is only in *hope* that there is progress. If we lose hope we lose the evolving force—if hope dies down everything dies down with it. Let a nation become convinced of the vanity of all things, of the

uselessness of all effort, forthwith its hope and enthusiasm expire. Amid endless disappointments and disasters hope sustains a nation and urges it forward in the way of life and victory. 'When the heart sinks the ship sinks,' and when a people lose heart the mightiest empire sinks, the richest civilisation suffers wreck. Now, the religion of Christ is pre-eminently the religion of hope. 'Of all the virtues, Hope is the most distinctively Christian,' says John Ruskin most truthfully. And this touching the race as well as the individual life. Of the confusion and anguish of the world there is no mistake but everything depends upon the interpretation of the wailing creation. Says the pessimistic philosophy, the world is in its death-throes, it heaves with the mortal agony, its groan is the death-rattle. And herein that philosophy strikes at the very root of civilisation and progress. No, says Christianity, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain ; it is not the death-rattle, it is the birth-pang of a grander world that is now coming into the light ; and the sorrow of the present time shall soon be forgotten for joy that a new, pure earth has been born into the sweet brotherhood of the stars. And herein is the faith of Christ a well-spring of life and energy to our race as it struggles onward to its goal of glory. We are saved by hope—that is, by Christ. 'Things to come are yours ; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

The future is ours—it belongs to the Christian. The faith of Christ presides over the march of progress. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into the Church of Christ; all the great movements of our age are movements originated by the Christian sentiment, and sustained by it; the new earth for which we long will be the Kingdom of Christ. Does anyone object that some other religion may supersede the Christian faith and carry civilisation forward to its final stages? Brethren, look dispassionately at the world to-day, consider its new theories, religions, and Bibles, and you must confess it is no more likely that Christianity will be superseded than that the electric light will supersede the sun.

Is it objected that I have spoken of the future so indistinctly that you could not tell very clearly whether I was speaking of this world or the heavenly world? The fact is, there is no need to draw any sharp line between the two. On a bright summer's day you have seen heaven and earth so mingled, intermingled, that you could hardly tell which was which, where one ended and the other began—sky and landscape were bathed in one ocean of glorious sunshine, the waters reflected the clouds, the trees expanded into the blue, the blue bathed the trees, and the rainbow, with its arch on high and its foot on the meadow, bound above and below into one splendid unity with its gorgeous chords of colour. So in looking into revelation, when it writes of the glorious future you hardly know

whether it intends the celestial or the terrestrial, but, in fact, it is all celestial, the kingdoms of the world have become the Kingdom of God and of His Christ, and all tears are wiped from all faces. And in that glorious future all who are in Christ shall consciously and eternally share. 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in Him.'

Brethren, let us be sure that we ourselves are found in Christ. If we are without Him nothing is ours, however for a while things may seem to be ours. The kingdom of God has come nigh us in Christ ; let us take heed lest any of us fail to enter, through indifference, through unbelief, through postponement. Let us not rest until we are Christ's, and feel His love and peace in our hearts. It is Christ in you the hope of glory. Then all is ours. As one of the Puritans says, 'Marry the heir, and have all.' And now, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father ; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

VII.

MEN OF ACTION.

"Benaiah, . . . who had done many acts."—1 Chron. xi. 22.

THE field of action in the case of Benaiah and his compatriots lay very largely in the direction of physical prowess, of military enterprise and achievement; the field of action to which I would now draw your attention lies in the moral and evangelical direction. We are not called upon to contend with lions and leopards, but we have work quite as hard to do, fights as difficult to brave. Paul fought with beasts at Ephesus, and we have to fight beasts in Manchester, to wage constant war upon the vices and passions which seek to destroy us, and to destroy society. Our Master has sent us forth to tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon we are to trample underfoot. And not only are we to contend against the evil, we are ardently to foster the good wherever it is struggling to unfold itself.

I. Let me speak first of—*the value of action.* And when we speak of the value of action we must not be supposed to depreciate the value of thought. Worthy

action would be impossible without reflection. But reflection and aspiration must have a practical bearing —the dreamer must strive to realise his dreams. The man of ideas must also be a man of deeds ; the man of feeling must go beyond sentiment and criticism, and seek immediately and earnestly to improve and bless the actual world. The whole Christian religion is eminently practical. The Deity, as made known to us in revelation, is a God of action. Some Eastern religions set forth the Deity as absorbed in thought ; He sits mute and motionless through eternities ; anything like action would seem derogatory to His supreme perfection and glory. And there is no wonder that these religions find the highest type of human character in the poet, the philosopher, the mystic. Others of these religions set at the top of Olympus great lazy gods, who have nothing else to do but to breathe incense and drink ambrosial cups. The idea of any kind of work is utterly foreign to them. The workers are far below the feet of these idle, supreme gods. Now, the Bible differs immensely from all this. It shows us God as a Spirit, God existing before all things, and sitting above all things, but still a God who reveals Himself in action, who in His manifold works shows forth His eternal wisdom and love and beauty. He is not the Thinker only, but the Maker. He has made known His eternal perfections in the works of His hands—in suns, worlds, creatures, in the teeming wonders of

summers and winters. 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty.' And our blessed Lord glorifies action. Whilst He did not neglect reflection, contemplation, devotion, He was eminently a man of many acts. How full, how strangely full, of work and grace was our Lord's life! We are surprised sometimes at the work which some men manage to get into life—a soldier like Napoleon, an artist like Michael Angelo, a reformer like Luther; but no life is more amazing than that of our Lord. It does not seem one life, but many lives—not a brief life, but a patriarchal, a millennial life. Our Lord was far away from being a mere theorist. He was ever teaching, comforting, feeding, healing, going about doing good, morning, noon, and night, in the city streets, the fields, the home, the desert, the sea. He could declare, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'

And we see the same determination to action in the Apostles. They were men of thought, but not less men of action. You have from their hand the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistles to the Corinthians,—writings full of imagination, argument, feeling; but the record does not end with theological treatises. There is another book, 'The Acts of the Apostles.' And what a wonderful record it is of loving, heroic, manifold, unceasing action! No contrast could be sharper than that between the philosophers of Athens, logic-

choppers, system-spinners, word-painters, spending their whole time in telling or in hearing some new thing, and the Apostle Paul, hastening from city to city, teaching, directing, comforting, warning, helping, saving the multitude from their sins and sorrows. Very sharp is that contrast, and very instructive. Brethren, we are not to be talkers, dreamers, critics, but toilers in the vineyard of the Lord. We must leave solitude, and sentiment, and song, to do real, practical things for man's good and God's glory. We must do many acts, or we must try to do them. We must be 'steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Speaking of Liebig, the great chemist, George Eliot says, 'It was touching to see his hands, the nails black from the roots, the skin all grimed.' Ah! the hands burnt and soiled at the call of duty, in the service of mankind, are always touching and grand, grander far than hands white as a lily, which never touch any of the work of the world, any of the burdens of the race. To-day we prize men of action, and by-and-by God will pass with derision over all mere idealists and critics, and give His Divinest rewards to such as have entered heartily into the whole work of life, and served Him with both hands earnestly. *Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.

II. We consider—*the causes of inaction.* How is it that whilst the obligation of action is so

clearly enjoined there is so much standing aloof in life? How is it that so many shirk duty? How is it that men will content themselves with views and criticisms, but nervously shrink, as far as that is possible, from personal responsibility? How is it that so many stand all the day idle when there is so much to be done, and such rewards for the doing of it? They can write letters, and clever ones too, about the Battle of Life, but they keep out of that battle as far as they can; the less active part they are forced to play in it the better. They are content to dream, to drift.

(i) There is the *indolence* of our nature. It is easy to drift and dream. Goethe said, 'Action is always easier than thought,' and no doubt that is true if we remember what the poet meant by 'thought.' Slow, painful, torturing, exhausting, full of sorrow and sacrifice is that real thought which grapples with the problems of the world, the problems of life. Action is generally easier than thought after that order. But action is not easier than castle-building, soliloquising, fault-finding, lip-service. Earnest action means resolution, danger, fatigue. To slay lions in pits on snowy days means that a man puts aside soft indulgence, and taxes his powers to the uttermost. Brethren, it is often very hard to overcome the inertia of nature at the call of duty, in which there is so much that is disagreeable, difficult, dangerous. If

we look into the secular world, how industrious men seem—when the bell rings in the morning the million leap out of their beds and hasten to the post of duty as if they delighted in it. It would seem as if they courted darkness and cold and difficulty, and left their beds and dreams gladly at the sound of those charming bells. But we know that no love of duty explains this alacrity. It is the terrible spectres of hunger, shame, nakedness, death in the background which scourge the world to work. If men generally did no more work than they do from a pure sense of conscientiousness and duty there would be a great many bank holidays. The inertia of human nature is overcome only by mighty and austere considerations. Now, in the Church we are uncoerced, we are left to act from noble motives only. We are driven by no lash. The Church of Christ is always a voluntary Church —the place of free working, free suffering, free giving. And therefore what do we see? On many sides a strange lack of enthusiasm in the grand business of life. 'And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.' 'His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant.' Oh! how many *slothful* servants there are —men who waste great talents and opportunities, living superficially, carelessly, amusing themselves with idle dreams, deceiving themselves with idle words!

And yet, dear brethren, we have, if we will only realise it, the most powerful impulse to action. In this chapter from which we take our text we see what heroic things these warriors did for David's sake, what they did from pure love and loyalty to the coming king. But we serve David's Lord: He who calls us to zealous, brave action for righteousness' sake is far worthier than Israel's king. We seek to put the crown on the head of Him Whose right it is. We seek to build up an everlasting kingdom. We are sure of blessed and splendid recompense. The love of Christ constraineth *us*. Brethren, let us love not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

(ii) There is a certain *pride* of our nature which holds us back from action. So long as we live in imagination how grand everything is! Every possibility, every project that comes before the mind, is complete and exquisite. Everything is seen in epic fulness and harmony; it revolves in our brain with an ideal completeness and glory. But as soon as men begin to act they feel that their fine thought is mutilated, their fine frenzy dimmed and sobered. It is so in things merely intellectual. The poet's vision is of unearthly glory, but when he has got it on the page it is only like a fingered butterfly; the painter's dream is a glowing picture, but his picture is a mere photograph; the musician finds his elaborated symphony but an echo of the ethereal music he heard in his soul. And this imperfection clings to all action.

Every lofty idea, every large purpose, is damaged terribly in the effort to give it articulation and embodiment. A thousand things in the actual world dwarf and cripple and disfigure what emerges in the brain so large and fair. And it is this poverty of action by the side of thought that paralyses men. They cannot bear the defacing, mutilating, narrowing necessities of the actual world. In the mind you can despatch a whole menagerie of dragons, you can do it swiftly, completely, dramatically, but if you get into a pit on a snowy day the thing does not come off nearly so nicely. And this many men cannot bear. They exult in thought, they soar in fancy, they melt in feeling, they are thrilled with the joys of contemplation, but they cannot reconcile themselves to the poverty, the restrictions, the vulgarity, the triviality of action. Mentally they have achieved a whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of glorious conflicts and voyages, but they cannot have their poetry soiled and spoiled in attempting to thrust it into the narrow moulds of this commonplace world. Certain men are known by the sons of culture as Philistines. A superfine paper like the *Spectator* called a grand man like the late Mr. S. Morley a Philistine. Now, what is a Philistine generally, but a man who has tried to get noble ideas into life, into society, and for so doing he is reckoned no longer a being of distinction, he has demeaned himself? You can put your hand to the pen or brush or lyre with honour, but not to the

plough ; active service, veritable philanthropy, is vulgar.

My brethren, let us be willing to submit ourselves to the narrowing conditions of the actual world—if we cannot do good things as quickly, as perfectly, as gracefully as we could wish, let us do the best that we can. Amongst the many sacrifices we are called to make let us be willing to sacrifice perfection. The glamour of the imagination is worth a great deal, but it has become an evil thing if it paralyses us in the world of men, and things, and deeds. The worker may seem greatly inferior to the idealist, but he is not. A strange value belongs to all honest action. The poor hut you succeed in putting up on the earth is worth a thousand gorgeous castles in the air ; the affectionate, faithful words you stammer out are more than all the golden eloquence of your unspoken sermons ; the hours of work so full of what is poor and disappointing are better than years of barren reverie ; the few children you teach, the few poor you bless, count for more than all those splendid Utopias of the soul which dissolve like the baseless fabric of a vision, and leave not a wreck behind.

(iii) There is in us a *cowardice* of spirit which restrains us from action. It often seems such a hopeless thing to attack evil, to go down into a pit on a snowy day ; it often seems a hopeless thing to attempt to secure the highest good. And those who attempt it are scorned and ridiculed. People will say to you

sometimes, 'You see that house, very large, very striking, very handsome, but it was a ridiculous thing to build it there; we call it "Smith's Folly."' 'You see those grounds, they are really laid out with great skill and taste, full of fine trees and flowers and waterfalls, but they cost a lot of money; we call them "Jones's Folly."' Very probably Smith and Jones were men of large original souls, breaking away from poor conventional life and aiming to bring some new glory and joy into the world, but the little people deride and scoff and baptize the things of magnificence as foolery. So often when men attempt large things for God, they are criticised and reprobated. Indeed, almost any kind of action will wear the semblance of mistake, and inefficiency, and failure, and seem imprudent and foolish. And many cannot bear all this criticism and difficulty which belong to action. The outlook is so utterly discouraging—

> 'And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
> And enterprises of great pith and moment,
> With this regard, their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action.'

But, brethren, we have every reason for courage and hope. It seemed a forlorn hope to attack a lion in a pit on a snowy day, a difficult work, in a difficult place, at a difficult season, but it was done. So evil seems rampant, it is entrenched, it is favoured by time and circumstances, but it can be routed by brave men.

Brethren, there must be no unbelief; let us put our heart into our work, and we shall do valiantly, we shall prevail against the lion, and against the bear—against evils of all types and degrees, in all places, always.

Let us beware of shirking life in any way. Let us assume all its obligations, let us fill the hours with steady, faithful action; let us not simply brood, and discuss, and aspire, and postpone; let all our days be full of interest, and enterprises, and endeavours. 'In all labour there is profit, but the talk of the lip tendeth only to penury.' Let us go from one task to another full of spirit and full of faith in all the work and calling of life. When Agesilaus saw his enemy Epaminondas at the head of the invading Theban army, near Sparta, he burst into the exclamation of praise, 'O thou man of great deeds!' Splendid eulogy! Not of great words or romantic schemes. It may not be given to many of us to do great deeds; we may not be called to do many deeds; we may not be allowed to finish all our deeds; but let us be men of deeds; not of vain thoughts, and idle words, and barren promise. Acts, acts of love, mercy, helpfulness, diligence, conscientiousness—no sloth, no carelessness, no loafing. Every gift bright, every hour fruitful in the busy world, in the quiet house, in the Church of God. 'Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so watching.'

VIII.

MEN OF THOUGHT.

'And every evening He went forth out of the city.'—Mark xi. 19 (R.V.).

LAST week we spoke of men of action, and many of you would feel that the other side of life, the contemplative side, received only inadequate recognition. We now propose to consider that other side, to note the great importance of solitude and reflection in human life. Our blessed Lord, the Perfect Man, shows us in this, as in every other particular, the true conduct of life. 'Every evening He went forth out of the city.' He retired from the city to the village, He knew the value of society and solitude, and by alternating the busy life of the metropolis with the tranquil life of its green border-land He preserved the balance of His character and wrought fully the great work of His life. Let us observe, then—

I. *The necessity in life for this isolation and reflectiveness.* With our English practical genius we are inclined to look very suspiciously upon hours of solitude, we reckon what is executed as real and

valuable, but spaces of rest and thought are regarded by us as much less important. Oriental nations much given to brooding are compared with our pushing selves, much to their disadvantage; we regard mysticism and monasticism as altogether pitiful aberrations ; and as to shy, reticent students who live much alone with their thoughts, we have the conviction that on the whole they are poor creatures. We believe in having all our irons in the fire, and consider the time not spent between the anvil and the fire as lost, or much the same as lost.

But we cannot forget how much we are indebted for our intellectual power and mastery, for the riches of our civilisation, to men who have lived far away from the crowd. We may despise the silent thinkers, but they make our civilisation possible. In our literature, our arts, our science, our industry, we are immensely indebted to men who rarely mix with the maddening crowd, and men whom many of us would vote moonshiners. Just think of Darwin living year after year on that common in Kent, building nothing, making no fortune, bringing no mangel-wurzels to market, but for forty years living among his conservatories, sauntering in his garden, wandering in lanes and paths, watching seeds and worms and butterflies and doves and flowers, observing, comparing, speculating, rarely seen in society, and having nothing to do with the noisy, struggling world of trade, and politics, and fashion. To the eye of the strict utilitarian Darwin

was of very little use in the world. And yet that delicate, thoughtful man gave a new intellectual life to our age, and made those profound and fruitful discoveries which will affect largely the thought and life of all future generations. We must not then, as practical men, despise the man in the corner with a book, for he it is who gives light and life to the shop-keeping nation. And in the moral world it is the same. God took Israel into the wilderness of wandering, and kept them there for forty years; far away from the roar of cities, no building, no sowing, no reaping, no trading, nothing but the silence and emptiness of the desert, only solitude and thought and worship, and that period of sequestration was a very momentous one not only in the development of Israel, but in the education of the world. And so to-day we are deeply indebted for our religious thought and life to men who dwell apart in secret places, revolving the problems of the human heart, of human duty, of human destiny. Some people may regard religious thinkers as mere drones in the hive, but let us remember if they find nothing, make nothing, sell nothing, they raise the thoughts of the multitude, they keep the great ideals clear, they direct and inspire, and by their writing and preaching the best life of the nation is enlarged and perfected. And so, my brethren, the world of action is indebted to the world of thought. The branches waving in the wind may forget the hidden silent roots, but the roots are there, and from

these roots the proud branches draw their strength and glory.

In our individual life we must blend both aspects. We have considered the man of action and the man of thought apart, but in the individual life they must be combined as they were combined in the life of our glorious Pattern. Every morning He went forth into the city. We, too, must go with Him into the city; we must enter into public life; we must transact its business, bear its burdens, submit ourselves to its temptations and discipline; we must be mixed up with its trade and politics, its excitements, its speculations. We cannot be as delicate flowers kept under glass in the country. Every morning you pour into the city, and Christ could not recognise your goodness if it were not approved in intense practical life. 'Every evening He went forth out of the city.' We must accompany Him; we must have our quiet hours; we must stand still and behold the works of the Lord; we must go aside with our Master into a desert place; we must ponder the before and after; we must talk with God; we must look up into heaven. And in this alternation of life, action and rest, society and nature, duty and thought, shall we find the warp and woof of character; this flying shuttle marks the weaving of the bright raiment of immortality. We consider then—

II. *How we may best employ our hours of leisure and thought.* We cannot all of us literally go out

of the city every evening, but we may all have what is equivalent to that—hours of rest, seasons of retirement, breathing spaces in this busy, exhausting life. Now, how shall we best employ these pauses? How shall we get the fulness of blessing out of the moments when we have welcome holiday from the world?

(i) Let us hold *sweet communion with nature*. 'Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide.' And Christ in His journey to and from Bethany would delight Himself with the sunlight, the sunset, the rising of the stars, the tree putting forth its leaves, the birds, the grass, the flowers, the flocks. The mystics were sometimes hostile to nature. When Tauler passed through the convent garden, he drew his cap over his eyes, in order that the flowers might not disturb him in his abstractedly spiritual meditations. But Christ exulted in nature; He felt in all its bloomings and odours the presence and the working of the living power and love of God. Wearied with the heat and dust and bustle of the city streets, how grateful were those walks through the cornfields, beneath the palms, among the lilies! And so, my brethren, we must get from the crowd to nature whenever we can, to feel its beauty, to drink in its serenity, to learn its holy teachings. Some of us are privileged every evening to get away from the city to rural scenes—let us, then, make the best of this, keeping our heart open to the whole noon of nature. And those of us who

cannot so often get away from the city are not altogether shut out from the reviving, healing influences of nature. Last week I saw the moon in your sky; it certainly looked in the murky depth more melancholy than I had ever seen it look before. But let us not be cynical. The heavens, the crimson sunsets, the rainbow, the stars of light, the flowers are here for those who have eyes to see and hearts to leap. And it is delightful to see even in these gloomy cities how the love of God's works survives. The other day I came through Ashton on the railway line. You know Ashton is not a city of palms or a city of roses, but in the dingiest neighbourhood, in a tumble-down tenement, there was a little box on the window-sill with a bit of heather blooming in it. I had just returned from Scotland, where all the hills are clothed in their purple pride, but that tuft of heather on the window-sill touched my heart more than all the mountains of Scotland. The love of God's beautiful world is not destroyed in us by all this grease and size and China clay and grime and rattle. You city men who so often feel that daily life robs your heart of its freshness, that it makes you suspicious, and hard and narrow, that it leaves you sordid and selfish, that it makes a practical atheist of you in spite of yourself, whenever you can, hasten away from man's world to God's world, and you shall be refreshed. Grieved by the abounding sinfulness of the city, look at the infinite blue above you, which

is the symbol of the holiness of Him Who sits above it; look at the green earth, which, like the emerald rainbow about the throne, reminds you of the everlasting mercy and grace. Do you feel sometimes, in this great and awful struggle for bread, that you tremble for to-morrow? Oh, look and see how God clothes with gold the furze of the waste, and sprinkles with azure the wing of the bird, and shall He not take care of you, O ye of little faith? Go out with your Master to the country as His disciples did of old, let Him interpret nature to you and for you, and your heart shall burn within you whilst He talks with you by the way.

(ii) Let us *cultivate the fellowship of the family.* How precious to Jesus was the house at Bethany. We are told by travellers that Bethany is the perfection of retirement and repose, of seclusion and lovely peace. And here Christ came, lighted by the evening star. With Lazarus and his sisters Jesus held rare fellowship, and forgot the bitter disputations with scribes and Pharisees, and all that had made his heart sore and sad in Jerusalem. Every evening He went forth out of the city, to talk serenely, to read, to sing, to worship in the quiet home of loving souls. My brethren, our homes ought to be places of repose and refreshment. The Englishman's home is a lily-spangled path by the cruel road of public life, and we must take care of this enchanted strip. There are many temptations

in these days to abridge our fireside life ; many things tend to lessen the hours men spend with their families. Let us be sure that neither pleasure nor business limits the sweet rest and sunny communion of our domestic life. Oh that all our homes might be like that at Bethany—full of unity, affection, devoutness —places where Christ is welcomed, where Christ's Spirit dwells, where Christ's Spirit prevails ! and when weary with the troubled, moaning waters of the outside world our home shall be the ark giving grateful rest to the sole of our foot.

(iii) Let us take *refuge in the Word of God and prayer*. We know how often Jesus went into some silent desert or lonely mountain that He might commune with His Heavenly Father. How often must Christ on these occasions have pondered the Book of the Law, and found light and strength as He read and prayed ! How comforting to His weary, wounded heart ! My brother, let us go forth out of the city that we may read God's Word and pray to our Father in secret. One of our ministers has just published an excellent book, entitled *Alone with the Word*. How refreshing, inspiriting, are hours alone with the Word ! Then do we forget the fatigues of life, then do we spread our wings again, then do we breathe the purer, ampler air. Much of the reading of men in their leisure hours is a mere lotus-eating—it is that romantic literature which is only enervating, unfitting men for active

life; but noble, intellectual, and spiritual reading shall at once solace and strengthen the spirit. Are you chagrined and discouraged by town life, its small ideas, its vulgar struggles, its uncharitable judgments, its avarice, its cunning, its cruelty? get away to the blessed Book and the quiet chamber, and you shall forget it all. There is in Roumania a valley, known as the Kezanlik, entirely given up to rose culture. During the flowering season it is from the top of the hill on either side one mass of flowers. So saturated is the air with the perfume that it clings to the body and clothes, and the scent remains for days. Get away to your Bibles, to those precious flower-paths, to the hills of spices, walk there, muse there, pray there, and the dust of the city shall be cleansed, and in the strength and sweetness of those hours you shall go many days.

(iv) Let us have *our spaces of pure meditation*—hours in which we simply think over God's dealings with us, without any distinct method or purpose; not hours of study, but spaces when the soul is left open for any sweet thought or influence it may please God to send. Amiel says 'Reverie is the Sunday of the mind.' And the mind in these days can often do with a Sunday in which the brain shall do no manner of work: simply to sit and watch and wonder and fill the spirit with influences rather than with ideas. We are not always doing the most when the brain is strained, when the soul is agitated, when

we fussily run to and fro; in our hours of quietness we may be like the mountain lake that sleeps with all heaven mirrored on its bosom.

Brethren, people generally appreciate in these days the physical advantages of getting out of the city ; it refreshes them, they breathe pure air, their blood is vitalised; but it is of still greater advantage that we leave it in spirit, and inhale the air and walk in the light of the upper world. If we do this it will keep our vision clear. The Greenwich Observatory would be of little use if it were set down in the City of London; the astronomer needs to be away from the thick atmosphere, that he may keep fully in view the lights of heaven; so do we if we are to keep before us the eternal truths. If we withdraw from the world as Jesus did, it will enable us to throw off continually the corroding, defiling influences of active life. The one tree that grows well in London is the plane tree, and the reason why it does so is that it annually sheds its bark, and thus the deadly acids which destroy vegetation are constantly thrown off, and the tree lifts up its crown of verdure in the very heart of the city, rejoicing as in a forest. So day by day in still hours must we cast off from our soul the gathering influences of worldliness and unbelief, and thus even in Babylon shall we flourish as the cedars of Lebanon. And if we spend our leisure hours as I have suggested, it will preserve in us all the freshness and joy and hope of life. In our day there is much disgust with

life, much of the sense of weariness and despair. How is this? Does it not arise from our being too much with the world, until we are worn out with its excitements and mocked with its prizes, and no longer capable of noble joy? We are sickened with lamp-posts, pillar-boxes, trams, railways, jostling crowds, policemen, and tax-collectors. I believe they have just built a Buddhist temple in Paris, and a number of *bonzes* have arrived to conduct the services. Western civilisation, we are told, in its wild and restless heart, has begun to feel the need of the quietist doctrines of Buddhism. We are overwrought, we are disgusted; we want quietism, insensibility, annihilation: all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Brethren, this weariness arises out of a deficiency of thought, of high, spiritual thought in leisure hours. Let us think, pray, read; let us ponder the depths and look into the heights, and the fatigue of life shall be no more: we shall feel ourselves the strong immortal citizens of the City of God.

IX.

SELF-RESPECT.

'And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.'—Neh. vi. 11.

FIRST a few words touching—

I. *The nature of self-respect.* It is very important that we get a clear view of this central virtue, for it is easy to mistake its real character.

Self-respect is to be distinguished from *vanity*. Vanity is the vice of over-estimating ourselves on the grounds of what is superficial and accidental in our life. Men are vain about their beauty, their position, their wealth, their cleverness. In contradistinction to this, self-respect fixes on what is personal and intrinsic—it is regard to our spirit, manhood, character. The creatures of vanity, the mashers of all spheres, are at the utmost remove from self-respect. Self-respect is not self-conceit. Self-respect is to be distinguished from *pride*. Pride consists in exalting ourselves at the expense of others, in depreciating others, in scorning them, in trampling upon them if we dare. Pride is looking down upon

our neighbours, self-respect the looking up to one's self. One of our writers complains that in modern times self-respect has given place to humility, but really there is no incompatibility between self-respect and humility. What is humility but the sense of our personal limitation and imperfection? And surely self-respect must be based on the sense of what we are, and not upon a false estimate of ourselves. Haughtiness, arrogance, contempt are far from the sense of a noble self-respect. True self-respect must do justice to all men, it is full of courtesy and magnanimity—to the poorest, the lowliest, the most unfortunate and despised. Self-respect is to be distinguished from *selfishness*. Some people imagine that self-respect means simply number one; that it consists in looking after your own rights and pleasures with the least possible regard to the rights and privileges of those about you. But self-respect is not egotism; it is not self-seeking, not self-glorification, not self-indulgence. Self-respect is eminently social, fully recognising the claims, the honours, the happiness of all men. My brethren, Christianity has set this great doctrine in a true light. Whenever self-respect is spoken of by some, we are sent back to old Rome to study it. It is considered an ancient Roman virtue that we hardly understand in these days. We must study it in Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Cato, and Trajan. But in fact Jesus Christ set this virtue forth in its truest light. He purified it from

the base elements which adulterated the self-respect of the Stoic—the vanity, the pride, the selfishness. Jesus Christ has taught us perfectly the crowning grace—He has taught us, oh, wondrous lesson! how to make humility noble, how to make self-respect humble.

Self-respect may be defined, then, as a true regard to the merit of our own personality—we respect ourselves for what we are in and by ourselves. It is the sense of individual worth. It has nothing to do with pedigree—it is not a question of having a grandfather; it has nothing to do with rank; it is not a question of clothes—your fine apparel reflects credit on your tailor, your milliner, not on you; it has nothing to do with wealth—Dives may be without it, Lazarus may possess it. It is that sense of personal dignity which will not permit us to do base things, for fear of losing caste in our own eyes.

We consider—

II. *The grounds of self-respect.* In the *New Review* the other month was an article by Mrs. Lynn-Linton on 'The Religion of Self-respect.' This writer tells us that 'self-respect is essentially self-supported, and is—because it is.' But this will not do. If I am to appeal to my own inherent dignity I must know in what that dignity consists. If we are to respect ourselves there must be in us something to respect. There is nothing more laughable than to see a man insisting on his dignity when we all know that there

is no dignity to insist upon. It is all very well to tell us that self-respect has nothing to do with spiritual religion nor imaginative theologies, that it is because it is, but we know that it is not self-supporting, that it must rest on something. What, then, is that 'something' on which we base a really large and noble and rational self-respect?

(i) Self-respect must spring from *the consciousness that we have a great nature, and that we duly honour it.* This is really the first foundation of self-respect. If our nature has in it no intrinsic grandeur there is no foundation for any self-respect properly so called. If you degrade man into a mere machine, or a mere animal, regarding him as nothing more than the expression of blind force, where is the room for self-respect in any worthy acceptation of that term? One of our sceptics speaks of 'the strutting importance of creatures with a private soul to save.' What does he mean? He means that the consciousness of the spirituality of our nature gives us the sense of personal dignity. It does, and what should we be without that sense? Our writers complain that the religion of self-respect is dead or dying; that the sense of self-respect was once a guiding pillar of fire, but that pillar has now burnt down to ashes; if this is in any degree true, may it not be traced to the fact that many of our teachers have persistently sought to degrade human nature, to identify it with the brute, to pour upon it all kinds of ridicule and

contempt? Revelation, by assuring us of the inherent essential greatness of our nature, supplies the first grand reason for human self-respect. So long, then, as we act worthily we may all of us live with a lofty sense of our personal consequence. Whatever else we may be, we are men, with all the glory and hope that such rank implies. We may be obscure, unsuccessful, poor, afflicted, but we are still of royal lineage, the image of God is in us, eternity is set in our heart, to us pertains an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. In deepest misfortune we may still respect ourselves.

But we *must* act worthily, otherwise the sense of having acted unworthily will fill us with shame and loathing. We say of a man who has been guilty of some fault or other, 'He lowered himself;' 'He let himself down.' Yes, all sin is a lowering of ourselves. He who acts justly, faithfully, purely, rationally maintains the high level of his nature, nay, is ever raising himself to fuller perfection and blessedness; but acting selfishly, sensually we debase ourselves. 'Man being in honour, and understanding not, becomes like the beasts which perish.' And when we have lowered ourselves we know it. We may act a base part, act from unworthy motives, and still retain our credit with the world, they do not know our sin and guilt, but we know ourselves, and no sooner do we act beneath the dignity of our divine and rational nature than we lose caste in our own eyes and prove

a sense of degradation no beast may know. Brethren, in days of temptation let us remember our Divine origin, our Divine spirit, our Divine calling. Should such a man as I lie, cheat, debauch myself with drink, stain myself with uncleanness? should I stoop to folly, play the fool? Nehemiah would not commit sacrilege by fleeing into the Temple to save his life; he felt that he was a temple himself, and that the indwelling, overshadowing Deity would preserve him. Brethren, remember that you are living temples, that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you; honour yourselves, keep yourselves in holiness of thought and life, and God will hide you in the secret place; but if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.

(ii) Self-respect must spring *from the consciousness that we have a great name, and that we live up to it.* It has been said that 'men live up to their name.' There is great truth in this; let a man inherit a great name, or acquire a great name, and there is in him an instinctive ambition to live up to it—he does not like to fall below his title and reputation. But, brethren, we bear a 'great name, the greatest name—we are called Christians. The name that expresses the utmost grandeur of spirit, beauty of character, magnanimity of life. This name is ours—strangely enough it is our happy lot to bear this supreme designation.

Just as we fall short of the glorious ideal we have in Christ shall we injure our sense of self-respect,

just as we are faithful to that ideal shall our sense of self-respect be most delicate and precious. Live up to your name. Do it in every season of temptation. Say, should such a man as I, called by Christ's name, registered with His people, rejoicing in His fellowship, called to His eternal glory—should I do this thing, so false, so spotted, so mischievous? Live up to your name. Do it in respect to every perfection of character. Say, should such a man as I, called by His name Who was full of living beauty, in whom there was no guile—should I be content with a superficial, imperfect, irregular goodness? Live up to your name. Do it in respect to the service of your generation. Say, should such a man as I, called by His name Who laid down His life for the world—should I be slothful, illiberal, selfish? Oh! there is a wonderful power in a great name. The stammerer remembering Demosthenes waxes eloquent; the painter remembering Raphael finds his canvas flush with a line of deeper beauty; the soldier recalling the name of Alexander grows into a hero; and shall not the name of Christ inspire us, and make us to share our Lord's perfection? At every turn remember your great name, live up to it, and you may be as poor as your Master was, persecuted as He was, crushed as He was, but you shall share His sense of self-respect and wear ever the crown of thorns as a crown of glory.

(iii) Self-respect must spring from *the consciousness*

that we have a great work to do and that we do it. A man respects himself just as he knows the importance of the task assigned him. Nehemiah, in the text, felt this, 'I am doing a great work.' He was entrusted with a grand task, he was a man of consequence, and he respected himself accordingly. He who is to feel self-respect must know that his work is a great work, and that he is faithfully doing it. If our work is contemptible there can be no self-respect; if our work is grand, but left undone, there can be none.

But can every worker in this human hive say, 'I am doing a great work'? Every worker may declare this as truly as Nehemiah could. Never impair your sense of dignity by thinking your work poor. 'Magnify your office' whatever it may be, and be sure when you have magnified it to the utmost you have not perceived a thousandth part of its grandeur and importance. Edward Smith, in his most interesting book, *Three Years in Central London*, tells of a poor working man coming into the church and exclaiming, 'Before the Mission started I was a nobody here; but now I am a somebody.' Yes, it is the mission of Christianity to make the lowliest man feel his personal dignity and his great importance as one of the workers of the world. You have a great work; do it. Be able to-day to say with your Master, 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' Be able to say with Him

to-morrow, 'I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do.' And you shall have a sense of dignity beyond purple robes or hoops of gold.

III. *The value of self-respect.*

(i) It has a *guiding* value in all times of perplexity. In the rebuilding of Jerusalem, Nehemiah found many enemies, who sought to embarrass him, and to arrest the great work in which he was engaged. Amongst other stratagems, a false prophet, Shemaiah, who was hired by Tobiah and Sanballat, tried to induce the noble patriot to take an illegal step. He told Nehemiah that his enemies intended to kill him in the night, and he advised him to flee into the Holy Place of the Temple, and to protect his life from the machinations of his enemies by closing the Temple doors. Now, to enter and to shut himself within the Holy Place would have been a grave desecration of the house of God, an indiscretion his enemies would immediately have laid hold of to discredit him, to destroy his reputation and authority. Nehemiah might easily have been imposed upon by the cunning, plausible scheme, but he was saved by his sense of self-respect. 'Should such a man as I flee? and what man like me would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in.' His sense of self-respect saved him from the crafty counsel of his masked foe. My brethren, self-respect has a true instinct in moments of perplexity and peril.

(ii) It has an *inspiring* value in days of temptation

and danger. Nehemiah felt that he could die, but he could not do the illegal thing. He was building the wall about Jerusalem, but his sense of self-respect was a grander wall about himself. And so it ever strengthens men. It will not permit the politician to change his coat for the sake of office; it will not permit the shopkeeper to lie for the sake of lucre; it will not permit the literary man to write below himself for the sake of popularity or pence; it will not permit the man tempted by fashion or pleasure to barter his birthright for red pottage. It makes the man, the hero, the martyr.

(iii) It has a *social* value. Nehemiah was a patriot—he lived for his nation, he was ready to die for it, and his self-respect only made such patriotism possible. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' What does the Decalogue mean? Thou shalt respect thy neighbour as thyself; and it is only as a man does respect himself that he can respect other people, live for them, suffer for them, die for them. He who has no self-respect regards society with his tongue in his cheek. He who feels the dignity of human nature in himself, the grandeur of human duty in his own vocation, the glory and blessedness of Christianity in his own experience, he regards all men with sympathy and admiration, and is prepared to make great sacrifices on their behalf. Truly, self-respect is the rootwork of respect for others. True to our own selves, we cannot be false to any man.

If you have a true self-regard it will make you considerate, respectful, sympathetic, just, and generous to all. Honour yourself, and you shall honour all men.

(iv) It is the secret of *personal satisfaction*. One of our poets writes :—

> 'Colder far than frozen snow,
> Bitterer than death or woe,
> Heaviest load by mortal borne,
> Is the burden of self-scorn.'

Yes, heaviest load of all that can burden mortality is that. To be mean in one's own eyes, to know that we do shabby things, despicable things, to loathe ourselves and yet have to live with ourselves, this is bitterer than death or woe—it is hell. On the other side, self-respect is just as precious as self-scorn is terrible—it is the serenity of heaven. We can bear any suffering, any sorrow, any scorn, so long as we do not scorn ourselves. As Spenser sings :—

> 'Losse is no shame, nor to be lesse than foe,
> But to be lesser than thyself.'

Oh, be not lesser than thyself, and there is no shame to thee—only glory, honour, immortality ! Let us see to it that we have the witness of God's Spirit and our own.

X.

A GRAVE MISCALCULATION.

'I have written to him the great things of My law, but they were counted as a strange thing.'—Hos. viii. 12.

WHAT God complains of in this passage is, that whilst He has made known to Israel the loftiest truths of righteousness and grace, Israel has treated those truths as matters altogether foreign, with which he had the very least concern. The people disparaged the genuine Mosaic laws, bringing in foreign religions and strange customs. They might be free to acknowledge that the laws of Moses were good in the day when they were given—they were then appropriate to the time, to the place, to the people—but everything had changed. The Mosaic law had lost its relevancy and force, the great things of the law were counted as strange things. My brethren, is not this matter of ignoring the law characteristic of our own day? Have not many amongst us come to regard revelation, with its precepts and promises, its law and grace, its sanctions and inspirations, as hav ing little relation to them, little interest for them? They

may regard revelation with more or less of curiosity, they may acknowledge that it served the race in successive stages of development, they may treat it with a general respect, but they do not feel that it is to them an immediate and pressing question of obligation and privilege. They live without it, they give it the go-by, they dismiss it with serene unconcern. The sun is ever pouring radiant energy upon this planet of ours, and the earth absorbs this energy and brings forth a million precious, glorious, lovely things; but it is conceivable that the surface of the earth might be composed of a perfectly reflecting, non-absorbing substance, and then all this energy would be immediately reflected back into space, and the earth would be a wilderness. So, my brethren, some hearts reject all the wealth of God's truth and love in revelation, and remain in barrenness and desolation. To what a large extent the Church of God is neglected, the Word of God ignored, you all know. What I propose, then, this morning, is to show that the truth of this Book is of vital concern to us all, and that we cannot neglect it without fatal loss. We remark—

I. *The truths of revelation are of the highest concern.* 'They were counted as a strange thing.' The fact is, we are compelled to leave many things in nature and life as strange things, for the world is large and life is short. Many things that we would like to consider we are compelled to leave altogether untouched. We can only attend to the more important

matters, to the most important—many other questions we must leave, although it would be interesting to consider them if time and opportunity served. That is so with every man's life ; he cannot identify himself with all desirable movements, master all tempting studies, excel in all arts ; he cannot pursue all trades ; he must fix upon what is most important and pressing first, then take other matters in hand as it may be possible, and at last leave much as belonging to the strange things with which it is impossible that he should concern himself. But one point of the text is, that the truths of revelation are of the first importance. 'I have written unto them the *great* things,' the *weighty* things, 'of My law.' It is possible the Lord Jesus quoted this passage when He spoke of 'the weightier matters of the law.' If the dilemma of life is that we cannot attend to everything, only to things of pre-eminent importance, then we must attend to the great doctrines of revelation, for they are the great things, the weighty things, the all-comprehending things. They are bound up with our highest interests—immediately bound up with those interests. They are more important than anything else, they determine everything else.

Take the doctrine of righteousness from the Old Testament. You are never permitted through the whole of revelation to lose sight of Sinai, and everywhere the moral law there delivered is spoken of with the greatest reverence. I know how some men affect

in these days to speak slightingly of the law ministered by Moses; they call the Commandments 'tea-table moralities.' So we are to believe that Sinai has dwindled into a tea-table, the angels into gossips, and the Ten Commandments into chatter. The law that filled the soul of Moses, of David, of Isaiah with profoundest awe; of Paul, of John, nay, the soul of the Lord Jesus Himself; the law that has commanded the reverence of the purest, deepest, noblest souls in all generations, is to be dismissed with a sneer. My brethren, cynical men may talk of the Old Testament as 'old clothes,' but they are old clothes that no moth can fret; they may talk of 'tea-table morality,' but the morality of Sinai is the morality of a throne, yea, of the throne of God, and on its golden links hang universal well-being and felicity. The righteousness of the law is essential to our worldly interests. It is only through obedience to the moral commandments that we inherit the earth. The righteousness of the law is essential to our character. In the law of Sinai we have the rule that will bring human nature to its best and brightest. We cannot build up a great, pure character except through obedience to its precepts. The righteousness of the law is essential to our happiness. 'Thou art the happy God; teach me Thy statutes.' The secret of God's infinite blessedness is in these statutes. The righteousness of the law is essential to our final salvation. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Foolish men call the laws of

Moses 'Semitic barbarisms,' but they might as well call the foundations of the earth 'granitic barbarisms, for all our higher life rests on the one as our houses and cities are built on the other.

Take the doctrine of grace from the New Testament. Is not this great doctrine essential? The Old Testament sets forth Sinai before us, and never permits us to lose sight of the mount that burned with fire; it everywhere insists on the majesty, the eternity, of the law, that righteousness is of first and chief importance to all intelligent beings. The New Testament brings another hill before us, even Calvary, of which it does not permit us ever to lose sight. The doctrine of grace is the grand doctrine here. The grand truth of the universe is, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Into this mystery angels desire to look. All heaven is excited by it. It was contemplated from eternity. It is the enrichment of all the worlds. It contemplates the eternity to come. It determines the heavens and hells of coming ages. Surely we may ask at the foot of the cross, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?' It is, my brethren, everything to you. The access to God is here, the motive to repentance is here, the forgiveness of sin is here, the peace of the conscience, the cleansing of the spirit, the hallowing of the life—all are here. Brethren, the Cross of Christ is the central point, it is the essential question, it is the supreme interest. Well

might the Apostle declare, 'Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' All the light, grace, strength, hope we need is in the name of the Lord Jesus, 'neither is there salvation in any other.' Dear brethren, the fulness of truth is here, the fulness of grace is here, and our whole salvation is bound up with our knowledge of these doctrines of God—in our reception of them into our heart, in our obedience to them in our life. As Moses said in his farewell charge to the children of Israel, so I may say to you, 'It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.'

My brethren, many people rather pride themselves upon neglecting religion. They consider that they attend to their business, and they have no time for religion. Religion is a fancy, a fashion, a luxury, a thing to be brought in if possible, to be left out if necessary. There are things that may be left out of life, that must be left out, but, let me say, it must not be religion. That must not be the strange thing, for it is the great thing, the weighty thing, the all-comprehending thing. It is the one thing needful. Whether you have time for pleasure or not, you must have time for this; whether you have time for the cultivation of taste or not, you must have time for this; whether time for wealth or honour, you must have time for this. The great truths of righteousness and grace are essential to our spirit, as the sun, the atmosphere, are to our body. What-

ever else we neglect, we must not neglect the spirit within us, the Spirit above us. Sell all, but buy the pearl of great price.

II. *The truths of revelation are of abiding concern.* The Jews in Hosea's time counted the law as 'a strange thing'—it had significance to their fathers, but its bearing was not so direct or imperative upon them; in a word, the law had become irrelevant, obsolete. Is it not thus that many consider the law of God in revelation as strange to-day? It belonged to the old world, it is irrelevant, inadequate to the modern world. It is thought by some to be quite a reflection upon us that we Gentiles should go back to the Jew for our moral science, that the nineteenth century should go back four thousand years. But do not these very objectors go back to the Greek for intellectual perfection? Do they not go to Euclid to learn mathematics, to Demosthenes to learn eloquence, to Praxiteles to learn sculpture, to Homer for the ideal of poetry? And they are not ashamed to go back and learn from these ancient masters; they glory in it. In thousands of years to come men will be going back to these intellectual Greeks, who laid down for all time the great sovereign principles of art and mathematics and eloquence. And so it pleased God to give the Hebrew the knowledge of righteousness, and it is no more reflection upon us to go back to Moses and Isaiah, to Job and Paul, than it is for us to go back to Homer and

Phidias. The scientist assures us that many great principles of natural life and growth and form were settled very far back indeed, and the historian assures us also that many great principles of art and law and government were settled very far back also; and with all our conceit, we must go to the ancients to learn great truths and laws. The art of Greece is immortal; immortal with a surer prophecy is the teaching of prophet and apostle: 'Heaven and earth may pass, but not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail.'

Our text teaches very emphatically the abiding validity of the law. 'I have written;' literally, 'I write,' or 'will write,' the future form being employed to mark the abiding obligation of the law. God keeps on writing the law; He is continually freshening it, and making it a living thing in the conscience of the world. Just as God stands behind this old, old world, pouring new life into it and making it a new world every spring, every summer, every autumn —fresh violets, fresh roses, fresh fruits and flowers— so God stands behind the old, old Bible, pouring new life into it, renewing it, unfolding fresh meanings, making all its ancient records to glow and palpitate with celestial fire and force. There are dead bibles in the world, but the funeral is not ours. Only within the last year or two in opening some tombs in Egypt royal mummies were found crowned with garlands of flowers. These flowers were

gathered more than three thousand years ago, and yet their colours were as fresh and brilliant as flowers just gathered from the earth. So the solemn and delightful truths of this Book keep their freshness through millenniums, only they are not as dead flowers gracing dead ages, but they are plants of life in God's own garden, and the leaves of them are still for the healing of the nations. Men speak of their having 'outgrown' revelation, of the age having 'outgrown' it. But the fact is not here. They have become insensible to it through persistent sin and neglect. In early life Mr. Darwin had a love for art, music, poetry, but with years he almost entirely lost the æsthetic faculty, and cared nothing for these noble things. Will anybody say that he 'outgrew' them? No, the faculties were aborted through neglect. And so men speak of outgrowing Christianity when they have become dead to it through a life of materialism, worldliness, lust, selfishness. You might as well speak of a blind man outgrowing the sun, or of a corpse having outgrown everything.

Do not think of God's Word as a strange thing, written for other ages, races, circumstances; it is written for our admonition and salvation upon whom the ends of the world have come. Has the lapse of time shown us that human nature is any better than it used to be, and that we have any less need of salvation? Surely it has not. Men to-day feel the deep depravity and weakness of their nature as

perhaps they never felt them before. Never did man feel more the bitterness of life, the vanity of life, the weariness, the hopelessness of life. The lapse of time has not shown us that we need no salvation, it has rather shown us how deep and awful is that gulf of despair in which the race groans. Has the lapse of time shown us any other way of deliverance, any other fountain of consolation, any other star of hope? It has not. We may confidently ask still, 'How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' We need the precious truths of this holy Book as much as ever; and these doctrines have all the peace-giving, purifying, inspiring power of past ages. The glory has not faded from the face of Moses, the harp of David is still in tune, the ink is not dry on the Epistles, the dew of youth is on the Saviour of the world. The law that condemns is full of power, so is the grace that saves to the uttermost. You stand in a new world, but Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, neither is there salvation in any other.

III. *The truths of revelation are of universal concern.* There is often in men the feeling that the truths of religion may concern others, but that they are not applicable to them. Let a hundred people read the same newspaper, and it is surprising what different things they see in it, and what different things they miss seeing. One will see the sporting news, another the commercial, another the shipping,

another the political, another the ecclesiastical, another the romantic, another the tragic ; one will see this trade, another that, one advertisements for situations, another for patent medicines ; one class of readers will never for years notice what another class always looks for first thing, and reads with eagerness. We have different positions, different tastes, different maladies, and what is full of interest to one man is a strange thing to another. But the weighty things of the law concern us all. There is no difference, every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God, and we all need the mercy of God in Christ. Pharisee, you need it. You need it to show you what you really are. Milliners have, I believe, what are called 'flattering glasses,' glasses which represent their fair customers as looking admirable in certain articles of dress. Strange thing, man makes nature lie and misrepresent. And there are plenty of flattering glasses into which men look, and in which they get a good conceit of themselves. But the mirror of the law does not flatter—in its pure, infinite depths we may see our true selves, and know the plague of our own heart. Publican, you need it : 'God be merciful unto me, a sinner.' Here is the response : 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.' Elsewhere there is remorse, despair ; but here the mercy of God unto eternal life. O brethren, how cold and insensible we are to these truths ! If I were to begin and

talk to you about Home Rule we should want the fire brigade directly ; but these truths of God, spirit, eternity excite us the very least. 'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see wonderful things out of Thy law.'

XI.

WORSE THAN THE HEATHEN.

'So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.'—2 Chron. xxxiii. 9.

'WORSE than the heathen.' Yes, this is the penalty of rejecting the fuller light: you sink lower than do those who never had that light. To speak of men amongst ourselves as worse than the heathen may be thought mere rhetoric; it seems simply the extravagant expression of the fact that civilised men may become very bad; but it is really, literally true that the refusal of great privilege works corresponding ruin, and that those who are better than the heathen in opportunity become worse than the heathen if that opportunity is ignored or rejected. This was true in the days of Manasseh, as our text teaches; the people of Judah out-Heroded Herod in superstition and excess of wickedness. How solemnly does our Lord teach the same awful truth in His pathetic denunciation of the cities of Galilee! Their rejected privileges had enormously aggravated their sin and judgment. And it is true to-day that to reject

Christ is to intensify our sin, to multiply our misery, to blacken our despair beyond anything known to the Pagan world—we become worse, we do worse, we suffer worse, than the heathen. First,—

I. *We become worse in faith and worship.* Manasseh went to excess in idolatry, practising it in its very worst forms. He reared up altars for Baalim. He caused his children to pass through the fire ; he used enchantments and witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards ; he built altars in the house of the Lord, and set a carved image in the house of God. There were elements of peculiar heinousness in his idolatry. And so, to-day, rejecting the knowledge of God in Christ, we err more grievously in matters of faith and worship than do the heathen. Let us see if this is not the case.

Is it not the case with those who, rejecting Christianity, adopt *atheism?* Affirming there is no God, they take a position lower than that of the heathen. The heathen have had some strange gods, some poor gods ; gods of wood and stone ; gods they could buy and sell and steal ; gods supremely ugly, grotesque, absurd ; but be sure of this, with their wooden gods, their comic gods, their vile gods, the heathen were nearer the central truth of all than are those proud philosophers who fancy they have got rid altogether of the idea of Deity. The ancients with Baal and Dagon, the poor African with his Fetish, the American Indian with his Great Medicine are nearer the truth than is

the man amongst ourselves who declares that there is no God. The idolater held a truth in a fragmentary, perverted, grotesque, and miserable form, but it was a truth—the truth of truths; and we may regard with something like reverence the most absurd beliefs and rites of idolatry, because of the great truths and possibilities they implied. As Coleridge says, 'The cow-tail which the dying Brahmin clutches convulsively becomes sanctified and sublime by the feelings which cluster round the act.' He who holds to God with the rotten thread of idolatry is so much better than he who has lost sight and hold of God altogether.

And do we not err worse than the heathen when, rejecting Christianity, we consent to worship *humanity?* It is a worship distinctly inferior to Pagan worship. Speaking of the idolaters of his day, the Apostle says: 'Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.' The Pagan worshipped and served the creature '*more* than the Creator.' But the Pagan of to-day worships the creature *instead* of the Creator. The partial eclipse has become a total eclipse. And then we must remember also that when the Pagans of antiquity worshipped their idols they always felt their god to be in some respect

superior to themselves, superior in strength, or beauty, or wisdom, or goodness, or venerableness ; whilst we, worshipping ourselves, do not look up at all, and are so much inferior to those who worshipped in the temples of Egypt, the shrines of Greece and Rome, to those who worship to-day in the pagodas of China, the sanctuaries of India, the idol-houses of the South Seas. The worship of Positivism lacks the saving principle of the old idolatries. 'The last state of that man is worse than the first.' Yes, and the last state of a people if they reject Christ is worse than the first, even if that first state were Druidism ; for to say that there is no god but corruptible man is to sink lower than those times of ignorance at which God winked.

II. *We become worse in hope.* All peoples have had some notion of a future world, some instinct of a future life, some vision or other of glory and delight. The man, therefore, who to-day rejects the hope of immortality is worse off than these heathen. The Apostle appears to teach this in what he writes to the Corinthians : 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' That is, all nations have had some hope of immortality, some hope beyond the grave, and if we, as Christians, have no hope beyond this life, we are of all men most miserable. The hope of the heathen was often very dim, very faint, but at its faintest it was infinitely better than the dogmatic denial of immortality which

we hear to-day. In the arctic world, where the sun rarely shines, the long and terrible winter is lighted up with strange flickering splendours coming and going in the sky, and although such lights are far inferior to the warm, brilliant sunshine in which we rejoice, yet they serve to relieve the long and awful night which reigns in the world of snow. So to the Pagan the world beyond the grave was lighted up by mythologies, poetry, prophecies, fancies, fables, it is so lighted up to-day, and these dim and flickering lights, which are not altogether illusive, are precious to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; but if we distinctly, dogmatically, deny the hope of the future, there are no stars, no moons, no auroras to relieve the gloom to us; it is darkness itself, the darkness cold as steel, dense and choking as despair. Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality to life, and those who believe in Him are no longer all their lifetime in bondage to the fear of death; but to reject Him is to find the fear of death more dark and terrible than it was before He came. The fact is, the world was never so poor in consolation and hope as it is now, if the teaching of Christ be rejected. The words Beauty, Love, Patriotism, Pleasure, Glory can never mean to us all they meant to the ancients, and they cannot charm our steps over the burning marl. If the larger hope is to be taken away, we see that these grand words have little meaning left. It is said to be a difficulty

with the electric light that it makes such deep shadows, they are so utterly dense and bewildering; so is it with Christianity, it brings a glorious light of truth and hope, but its shadows, if you compel it to make shadows, are correspondingly profound: it throws into the grave itself a blackness of darkness which the heathen never knew.

III. *We become worse in character.* It is notorious that the crimes of Europe are darker than the crimes of Africa. Some time ago a book was written to show that the morality of London was in many respects worse than the morality of Calcutta, and we may easily believe the contention of that author was correct. The crimes of the heathen, dark enough, horrible enough, are less intensely wicked than are many of the crimes committed in our midst. We often warmly congratulate ourselves that infanticide, cannibalism, head-hunting, and so forth are so far away from us, but we are startled from time to time to find the bloodiest tragedies perpetrated at our doors. And the same is true of the more ordinary vices of our civilisation—they are specially intense. Conflict, as we all know, brings out the powers of those who contend. A physical contest brings out your muscle, an intellectual conflict your brain, and a moral antagonism brings out your faculty for good or evil, as the case may be. If we contend against evil, it brings the good in us to fulness and perfection, and the longer and the bitterer our fight

against evil in any form, the deeper and stronger our virtue becomes, and so in ages of special darkness we have most glorious saints. But, on the other side, if we fight against light and truth and righteousness, we develop a strength of wickedness quite peculiar. To contend against Jesus Christ is a most awful thing, it is to develop the evil of human nature to a degree of power and enormity beyond that of any Pagan transgressor. And is it not so? Are not the vices of our civilisation most intense and appalling? Was violence ever more cruel? Here is a report from the *Daily Telegraph* of yesterday recording a prize-fight—a most horrible exhibition. And every few days that paper thinks it its duty calmly and sympathetically to record these brutal and bloody scenes. These base exhibitions sound a deep of infamy and cruelty lower than that of the Roman amphitheatre or the orgies of the South Seas. Was selfishness ever more cold-blooded and base than it is amongst us—thriving, as it so often does, on the health, the virtue, the lives, of innocent children, helpless women, unfortunate men? Was intemperance ever more excessive and inexcusable? Was lust ever more fierce? Did the sword ever drink more greedily the blood of the nations? Oh! it is a serious thing to reject the brightest light, the highest truth, the divinest purity, to strive against these; for the antagonism brings out the avarice and malice, the pride, the passion of our nature, and makes of us sinners exceedingly. There

is no barbarism like the barbarism of a Christian civilisation.

Brethren, some people think that we can let Christianity alone and be none the worse for letting it alone. But this is not so. It is amongst us, working every hour in our thought and life. Character cannot now be neutral and commonplace; we are excited, stimulated, intensified by the doctrines Christ taught, by the hopes and fears He awakened in our bosom. We are driven to be very good or very bad. The Gospel must be the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Carlyle, in his *French Revolution*, speaking of the old state of French society, says, 'There is life in it, or it could not rot.' Yes, there must be life to rot, and the more life the more rottenness and the swifter, if the life does not make sound and sweet. And so it is in Christendom to-day —there is in it a life, a power, a movement, which, if it does not save, makes a rottenness beyond the corruptions of the sensual cities of old. The country with a rich soil and a brilliant sun produces finest flowers, richest fruits, there fly the birds of Paradise and swim in splendour the most gorgeous butterflies; but it is exactly there also you find the deadliest plagues, the most horrible reptiles, the most fatal fruits and plants of poison. So in Christendom with the best in human character you have the worst, and the bad is very bad, worse than the heathen. The contrast is sharp, the antithesis is inevitable, you must

rise above heathen virtue, or you must sink beneath its vice.

IV. *We become worse in happiness.* We may see by the context that idolatry brought Israel into deepest misery. The idols might stand with comparative impunity in Egypt, in Phœnicia, but when the carved image was set up in the house of the Lord judgment broke forth speedily, and the inhabitants of Judæa were overwhelmed with afflictions and sorrows. So must it ever be. Where men reject the greater possibilities of happiness, you find misery most acute and tragic. Oh! how happy the love and obedience of Christ will make any of us—filling us with strength, with contentment, with hope! It will give us rest in adversity, it will teach us to get the poetry out of nature, the sweetness out of all human relationships and duties, the gladness out of all times of health and wealth. How happy the love and obedience of Christ would make the nations! Then would dawn the golden age, earth would laugh with flowers, the heavens would sing. But reject Christ, transgress His law, scorn His love, and you shall know a greater woe than the heathen ever tasted. Our writers often tell us that there is no misery in barbarism to equal the misery you may find in London, in Birmingham, in Manchester, in Leeds. And this is no rhetoric—it is the simple truth. Oh! what aching hearts there are in our midst, what weariness, what anguish, what despair! There is no wretchedness like the wretchedness

of Christian civilisation. If we do not grow the fir-tree, the thorn springs with terrible luxuriance; if we do not grow the myrtle, the briar tears with cruellest teeth; if we do not cherish the roses and lilies, weeds of special bitterness take their place; if we do not ripen fruits of sweetness and light, we find thick in our branches the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah. There is no 'flowery barbarism' for us; if barbarism at all, it is quite on the verge of hell. We grieve over the woes of Kaffirs, Fijians, Pariahs, but it is in our own midst that you find remorse, humiliation, shame, desperation, the soul in its uttermost agony. If we do not take the peace which Christ brings, we take the sword—a sword which pierces through the heart and leaves the wounded spirit, which it is hardest of all to bear.

V. *We become worse in destiny.* When judgment begins at the house of God it is terrible indeed. Was not this the element of deepest sorrow in the lamentation of our Lord over those who had rejected Him and His mercy? 'Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! . . . It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.' Their privileges aggravated their doom. And it is ever so. To be exalted to heaven is to unbelieving, disobedient men

to be cast down to hell. Faithless Jerusalem sinks lower than Sodom. Brethren, men shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God; let us, greatly privileged, beware. Some little while ago I was looking at those oak trees which grow close on the Cornish coast—they are scrubby, gnarled, miserable things, but they do their best. They are dreadfully tempest-beaten, the wind unceasingly pours upon them, yet they grow as high as they can, they take advantage of every bit of shelter, they bend and run quite across the road, sending up a daring little shoot here and there. They are dwarfed, misshapen things at the best, no poet or forester will care for them, but they looked to me quite pathetic and grand, their whole existence has been a tremendous struggle with a bitter fate, every leaf upon them was a fluttering flag of victory. So, brethren, many of the heathen have had fewest privileges, but they have been faithful, and God has now planted them in a milder clime and by the rivers of water. Surely we ought to be fat and flourishing. What shall be said if the tempest-beaten, lightning-riven trees of the sea-coast and mountain-tops are glorious, and we who have been planted in the King's garden are mean and barren? The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage; let us watch lest our wasted opportunity bring upon us the greater ruin.

And whilst we watch for ourselves, let us be moved with sympathy for our countrymen. Terrible, sorrowful things are before our eyes, but our enthusiasm may do much. Great advantages sometimes necessarily bring great evils, but it is not so with the evils of Christian civilisation; they are not necessary. Jesus Christ never proposed the greatest happiness of the greatest number, He proposed the greatest happiness of every one. This Mission, thank God, has been greatly blessed, so have our kindred missions in London. God has made the waste places to rejoice; the habitation of dragons, where each lay, has become grass with reeds and rushes. Scarlet sinners are wearing raiment white and clean. Thanksgiving and melody are in many once desolate dwellings. Go on: England is for Christ, the world is for Christ, and Christ shall have it; He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

XII.

THE LOGIC OF LIFE.

'The Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.'—1 Thess. ii. 13.

IN many respects the faith of Christ is confessedly comforting and inspiring—those who are ready to reject it, those often who have rejected it, are free to confess this. The doctrine of the existence of a God Who is love, and Who is ruling all things to high and noble ends; the doctrine of a Saviour Who can deliver from the power of sin, and give to those who believe in Him purity and peace; the doctrine of prayer; the hope of immortality; these are precious and delightful doctrines. But are they true? Say many, We know that the doctrines of Christianity are most desirable, but we will not believe in what is simply pleasant, we will believe only in what is true; oh that the doctrines of Christ were true! we would then exult in them with all our heart. Now, what I wish this morning is to point out the evidences of the faith of Christ in its effectual working; that it is the Word of God is declared by

its practical working; its Divinity, its validity, its preciousness are alike evidenced by its action and consequences in the experience and life of all those who truly receive it. Its practical working shows that it is no cunningly devised fable, but the very truth and power of God. There are three grand tests of religious truth. In circumstances the test of truth is utility; in character, beauty; in consciousness, happiness. I say that these are severally notes of truth, and when the three concur you have the fullest practical demonstration that can be given of the truthfulness of a religious doctrine. The faith of Christ will triumphantly bear these tests; it will demonstrate its truth and power by its effectual working on any, on all, of these lines.

I. *In circumstances the test of truth is utility.* Says one of our writers, 'A belief is not true because it is useful.' Now, I should say that it is, only you must take the word useful in a large sense. A belief is not shown to be true because it works to the profit of one man or a few men, or because it works to the profit of many men during a limited period; but a belief is shown to be true if it works to the profit of vast masses of men, in all kinds of conditions, through one generation after another. That which uniformly tends to the enrichment of society is manifestly in harmony with the law of the world. Utilitarianism is impregnable so far as it maintains that whatever is true in doctrine will evidence its truthfulness on

the field of actual life, by making men safer, richer, happier. We have a controversy to-day on the question of vaccination. How is that controversy to be settled, and the truth or falsity of the doctrine of inoculation determined? It can be settled only by close observation of the consequences of inoculation in many people, in many places, at many times. It is a question of statistics. Great names will not save or damn it, it will not continue to prevail simply because it has prevailed; it is on its trial, and the truth of Jenner's theory will be settled by the consequences of the retention or abandonment of the system on the health of the people, on the bills of mortality. We have a controversy to-day on the question of free-trade as against fair-trade. How is that controversy to be settled? Competent men will closely observe the effects of free-trade on the commerce and general prosperity of the nations adopting it, they will carefully compare with these nations the condition of the nations adopting protection, and the truth or falsity of the respective theories will be determined according to their influence on the material welfare of the countries concerned. Men are always appealing to the logic of life to attest the logic of theories. In physics, in politics, in trade, we are constantly testing doctrines by their workings in the actual world, and we determine their validity by their utility. Looking, then, at the subject broadly, we are justified in affirming that truth waits upon utility,

that utility waits upon truth. We must test a religious theory the same way—what are its effects on the positive material welfare of men and nations? A religion that permanently impoverishes a nation cannot be a true religion; and, on the contrary, a religion that secures the larger material welfare of its disciples has at least given one powerful evidence of its truth.

Now, I am bold to affirm that the faith of Christ will bear this test. Indeed, if any religion ever proved itself on the field of actual life it is the faith of Christ. It vindicates itself in the universal life. Christianity comes to the very lowest of the people, to the poor, the ignorant, the hopeless; but as they accept its grace and feel its power they immediately begin to rise in the social scale. It vindicates itself in the national life, creating civilisations full of energy and riches. Primitive Christianity began with slaves and slums and catacombs, but it is a matter of history that it has made many rich in many senses. John Wesley was scorned because his followers were a 'ragged regiment,' but the ragged regiment was soon clothed with scarlet; in all the towns of England these converts became the respectable citizens of the next generation. Amiel, whose Journal has just been published by Mrs. Humphry Ward, says in one of the moments of his perplexity, 'Scepticism is the wiser course, but in delivering us from error it tends to paralyse life.' Was ever a more surprising sentence

written? How can that be a deliverance from error that tends to paralyse life? Is it not the test of truth that it guards, and guides, and develops life? Is it not the sign of error that it paralyses life? What should we say if a politician should affirm, protection is the wiser course, but it paralyses trade? or if a physician should say, vaccination is the wiser course, but it paralyses health? or if a husbandman should say, pruning is the wiser course, but it paralyses the tree? What paralyses life is false, no matter what may be its plausibility. When the logic of the brain says one thing, and the logic of life persists to say another, the wiser course is to begin and revise the logic of the brain. The faith of Christ vindicates itself by stimulating life, enriching it, adorning it. Everything lives whithersoever the river cometh. All things partake of the fatness of the olive. And we all know that if our nation would carry out fully the faith of Christ it would be impossible to paint the abundance, the liberty, the gladness that would fill our land.

II. *In character the test of truth is beauty.* We test moral theories and ideals by their influence on character. The saying is attributed to Plato, 'Beauty is the splendour of truth.' That is, where beauty is truth is—beauty is the splendid sign of truth. Beauty of form is the splendour of physical truth, of rightness, fulness, proportion in the body; beauty of character is the splendour of moral truth, of rightness, fulness, proportion in the moral man. What is false in

doctrine and ideal will tell in deformity, in weakness, in incompleteness of character. What is true in doctrine and ideal will illustrate itself in nobility of character and life. Beauty is the splendour of truth.

Here once again Christianity finds attestation in the logical life. Proof that Christ brought the eternal doctrine was seen in His own personal perfection. 'I am the truth,' said our Lord. Where was the proof of that? His altogether loveliness. He who was the Truth was the Beauty. 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,' says the Psalmist. But man dimly understood what the beauty of God was until they saw it in the patience, the veracity, the purity, the tenderness, the disinterestedness of Jesus Christ. The world knew the incarnation of the truth when men beheld His glory. And the same splendour of character has been revealed in all generations in Christ's saints. Brethren, is it not true that some fresh splendour of Christian character is always striking the imagination of the world and extorting its admiration? A few years ago we were all talking of Livingstone and his life of noble self-denial. His philanthropy was so sublime that it was recognised everywhere, and the whole civilised world joined in his funeral in Westminster Abbey. Then in a few years Gordon's splendid figure stood out before the nations like an angel standing in the sun, his magnificent bravery, justice, mercifulness, unselfishness the theme of every tongue. And now once more the world is

blazoning the name of Father Damien, the hero of the lepers, and glorifying God that such love still lives in a selfish world. And so Christianity goes on supplying the grand characters of the world—the characters which keep up the moral ideal, which lift the world's thought, which continue to kindle that enthusiasm of humanity which is the purification and salvation of the race. And I would not only refer to saints who through special circumstances have been made spectacles to men and angels, but to a multitude of obscure disciples whose faith has made them truly beautiful. They are pure as the snow, good as gold, true as steel. There is a cynical temper which delights to discover the imperfections of goodness, but those who have goodness enough in themselves to feel the power of goodness in others will find everywhere Christian characters of the utmost excellence.

But it is objected that these characters are not what they are in beauty by virtue of Christianity. It is confidently affirmed that they would have been just as beautiful and fruitful if they had grown altogether outside the Christian Church. Some sceptic said of Sister Dora, 'She's a noble woman, but she'd have been that without her Christianity.'* But we cannot accept that. Could we accept it if a man were to say of a great golden sheaf of wheat that had brought forth a hundredfold, Yes, it has grown on ploughed land, it has been manured, weeded, watched, but it

* Morison, *Service of Man*, p. 223.

would have grown just the same on a prairie? Could we believe it if, bringing in great ripe clusters from the orchard, somebody should tell us that they would have grown just the same on a common? Could we believe it if, when the gardener brought in a prize rose from the conservatory, some one should tell us it would have grown all the same in the hedgerow? No, no, on the prairie the corn would have been little more than wild grass, on the common the mellow cluster would have been a crab-apple, on the hedge the prize flower would have been a dog-rose. The beauty of thousands is manifestly the consequence of their Christian faith, that works in them like a leaven from hour to hour, and their nobleness is the irresistible attestation of their faith. The test of truth is beauty, and the Church of Christ displays a beauty of holiness unseen elsewhere in the world.

III. In *consciousness the test of truth is happiness.* Professor Tyndall in one of his books says, 'The happiness of a faith and the truth of a faith are two totally different things.'* Now, I should say that they are not two totally different things, but, duly considered, they are one and the same thing. The truth of a material thing is seen in the physical satisfaction and strengthening that it gives, the truth of a moral doctrine in the deeper contentment and inspiration of the soul. The happiness of a coat, and the truth of a coat, are not two totally different things, but one

* *Forms of Water*, p. 125.

and the same thing—the happiness of the coat is the sign that it fits, that it keeps out the cold, and does effectually whatever is expected of a coat. And it is at last with our creed as with our coat—a grand proof of its truthfulness is found in the happiness it ensures, in the one case in the comfort and strengthening of the body, and in the other in the comfort and strengthening of the soul. If a man's faith gives him joy of the very highest kind—a joy altogether pure and unselfish, a joy that is intelligent, a joy that promotes the growth of the moral nature, a joy that persists through change and sorrow—I say that in such gladness he finds one of the strongest proofs of the Divinity of his creed. It is a matter of the first import that a faith makes myriads nobly happy.

Now, the logic of life once more accredits the faith of Christ—it makes its disciples truly happy. 'My peace I give unto you,' said the Master; 'not as the world giveth give I unto you.' Those who rest in the great doctrines of Christ share the peace and joy of Jesus Christ. Eating of the bread that He gives them, they do not hunger again; drinking of the water that He gives them, they do not thirst. Just as the eye is delighted with the lustre of the sunshine, as the ear is delighted with the concord of sweet sounds, as the nostril is delighted with the fragrance of the flower, so the soul is delighted with the truths revealed in Jesus Christ. 'These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy

might be full.' Brethren, this joy of our soul is a note of truth. The joy that is altogether apart from the carnal, a joy of intelligence, a joy that refines and exalts the whole nature, a joy which survives bitterest trial, a joy which no man takes from us, this is a sign of truth indeed, a sign that Jesus has put us into harmony with the abiding universe. Professor Dowden assures us 'that the best criticism of Shakespeare is that which comes out of immense enjoyment.' Is not that the best criticism of Jesus Christ? In the light of the immense enjoyment He has given us we understand Him the best, and know Him to be the true God and eternal life. When I see Jesus Christ making millions of men nobly happy, wiping tears from their faces, putting light into their eyes, songs into their lips, I feel that Christ is a bright reality, commending Himself to every man's conscience, reason, and heart. Christ bears well the logic of life, effectually working in all that believe.

Brethren, some of you have received the doctrine of Christ, and I ask you to treat it with the full confidence it deserves. Believe in it, enjoy it, give it free course. Let us treat Christ as we treat our dearest friends. We do not doubt them, listen eagerly to insinuations against them, scrutinise suspiciously all they say and do, and as the years go on we find that they are more true and dear than we ever thought. So let us treat Christ, let us rest in Him undoubtingly, and He will prove Himself with over-

whelming evidence to be the very Christ, the Rock of Ages, the Saviour to the uttermost. Some of you to whom I now speak hesitate to accept Christ, you cannot clear up all your doubts and difficulties. Brethren, surely already Christ is worthy of your confidence, there is preponderating evidence for that, and if you will only trust and serve Him the logic of life shall bring you a deeper satisfaction than any reasoning can give you. By heartfelt experience you shall know the preciousness of Christ, and cry exultingly, 'My Lord and my God!'

XIII.

SOCIAL SAPPERS.

'He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.'—Ps. vii. 15.

WE should seek no man's hurt; our whole strength should be given to raising men, never to lowering them. And yet there is much amongst men of the particular sin rebuked in the text.

I. *Let us show how this pit-digging may be done.* At the first reading of the text one might think that we are reading of the barbarous trick of a barbarous age, and that the subject had very little to do with us; but, in truth, this terrible iniquity exists now as certainly as it did in primitive times.

It may be done by attempting to lower a man's reputation. We are often guilty of talking in such a way that we 'lower' people. That is pit-digging, then. We talk against their history, their family connections, we put the worst construction on their words and actions. The Society papers live on this sort of thing, and many of us live on the Society papers. And what is done in general society is being

constantly done in our more limited spheres. In a house one child may damage a brother or sister's standing by sinister suggestions, one servant may easily whisper away another servant's good name; in a place of business one assistant may grievously wrong his comrade's character, one workman make a fellow-workman's place too hot for him, through nothing else than cunning insinuations. Scandal is a most prominent form of the pit-digging business, and into that pit sinks what is most precious to men.

It may be done by sapping a man's business. The world of business is a complex world, and the law of competition is a severe one, still we have a general idea of what is fair and unfair within the world of trade. Now, some men steadily set themselves to ruin their neighbour's business, thinking this essential to their own aggrandisement. It has been done again and again. You may do it by your capital, you may do it by your tongue, you may do it by your influence. And men sometimes seek to entice their neighbours into plausible and ruinous speculations. We often say, when a man has lost his money, He was entrapped into that. There is a good deal of such entrapping going on in these days. We have amongst us an acute body of men called Promoters, who live on this sort of thing. Their pits are diamond mines, ruby mines, gold mines, silver mines, lead mines, collieries, forests, and many other

such-like things. And how nicely they scatter the flowers of rhetoric over the pit's mouth that is to swallow up the fortunes and happiness and lives of confiding investors! It is an awful thing when one of these 'promoters' gets into the Church, and skilfully plots in the disguise of a saint. It is a cruel business, this pit-digging for gold, and still it is a common trade.

It may be done by endangering a man's character. Said Jeremiah, 'They have digged a pit for my soul.' And this is often done. It is done boldly by some. They will knowingly and designingly ruin their brother; they 'let them in' to some sin or other. They will do this sometimes for the sake of gain, sometimes for a companionship in guilt, sometimes out of a mere delight in iniquity. And sometimes we dig a pit for others when we do not think of all that we are doing. We voluntarily tempt people. We try their honesty by giving them enticing opportunities to steal; we try their tempers by putting irritating and provoking things in their way; we try their truthfulness by making it easy for them to lie; we try their sobriety by putting drink to their lips. Dear brethren, this is a bad business; we have no right to lay snares, nor to put an occasion of stumbling in our brother's way. If our brother shows a tendency to slide we must not grease the path. In these and many other ways, then, we may be guilty of the wretched sin condemned by the text. The

fact is, all sin is the digging of a pit. Ambition seems intent on lofty things, but when engaged on throne-building it is yet pit-digging. It seeks to raise itself on the trampled rights and pleasures and lives of others. Lying is pit-sinking. Lust serves itself by debasing others. Envy sickens at another's joy, and seeks to exalt itself by giving others a fall. Covetousness is always plotting to enjoy another's wealth. Sin would sink the throne of God—its whole philosophy is to rise by letting down whatever is up. Sin knows not how to shine but by blackening others; it knows not how to exalt itself but by undermining others; it knows not how to feast itself but by starving others; it knows not how to enrich itself but by spoiling others; it knows not how to save itself and glorify itself but by shaming and damning others.

II. *Let us characterise this work of pit-digging.* What kind of business is this that ever looks down and seeks to abase whatever it finds exalted?

(i) It is *dark* work, work that has to be done secretly, that has to be done under cover of the night; it is work to be done softly, to be wrapped up. Brethren, let us be shy of work that requires a great deal of secrecy and anonymity. Let us decline all that kind of work in which we should be ashamed for society to see us. The great motto of Positivism says, 'Live without concealment.' That is, live in the eye of the public, so act that you are not afraid

of public criticism. Christianity has always said the same thing. So live that you would not care if your house were glass. But more than this. Let us decline all work in which we should be ashamed to see ourselves occupied—all doings that would hurt our sense of self-respect. But more than this. Let us decline all that kind of work that we should shrink from bringing under the eye of God. This is going far beyond Positivism. Christianity tells you that another eye is upon you, even the eyes which are as a flame of fire. To God your house *is* transparent glass, nay, your breast is transparent glass, and He besets you behind and before, and knoweth your thoughts afar off. So live, then, that you do not offend the eyes of His glory. Brethren, there is an awful lot of sapping and mining going on in the world—crafty, cunning, crawling business—work of which the workmen are ashamed, of which they are afraid. Let us have nothing to do with it. The saint has nothing in common with the spider. Let us act only in such a way that we can boldly act in the light. 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.' It is bad work that is done in the dark—poachers' work, smugglers' work; then thieves break through and steal. We are not of the night, nor of darkness; let us, then, walk honestly,

as in the day. And if we live in this spirit we shall do no pit-digging.

(ii) It is *dirty* work. We know what is meant when any work is called dirty—we mean that it is ignoble, base, disgraceful. And whatever aims to lower men is of this character. Such conduct involves only base qualities. Sometimes it is prompted by covetousness. We attempt to injure others for the sake of our personal enrichment. Is not this detestable? Sometimes it springs from envy. We look upon the superior wealth and honour of others as if they were an injustice to us. It was so with the brethren of Joseph. They hated and envied their younger brother, and so put him into the pit, and we feel that their conduct was detestable throughout. Sometimes it is prompted by revenge, and revenge is a purely barbaric passion. Sometimes it springs from mere levity. As the Psalmist complains: 'For without cause have they hid from me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.' And what can be more detestable than wantonly to injure the welfare, the happiness of those who dwell securely by us? Pit-diggers may be well dressed, but their work is of a far dirtier kind than that of the delver in the earth. Those who lower their fellow-creatures may do it in a clever fashion, and cunningly hide from themselves the true nature of their work, but it is unspeakably base. You have seen, I dare say, when some magnate has turned the first sod of a new

reservoir, of a new dock, of a new canal, what an elegant silver spade, what a dainty bijou wheelbarrow; and much of the pit-digging in society is done in a very genteel fashion, by fine words, and plausible pretexts, and polite methods, but it is essentially foul notwithstanding. Any work that raises men, that adds to their happiness, that increases their credit is noble, however trivial and vulgar it may look; the bootblack, the crossing-sweeper, the dustman, all are praiseworthy if they are faithful, their common work is grand, their dirty work clean. But whatever work and talk tend to lower our neighbours, to lessen their credit, their fortune, their enjoyment, their character, is dirty as the slime of hell. Brethren, strive so to live that not a single splash of the vile mud may fall on that fair linen of the saints, which is white and clean.

(iii) It is *dismal* work. All the true work of life has a joy in it, but there is no brightness or blessing in letting people down. Everybody is agreed that grave-digging is not a very exhilarating business. The sexton may be proud of his task, and sing at it, yet it is rather a dreary trade—not many people would deliberately choose it. But, brethren, it is a far more joyless thing to be a grave-digger among living men. To dig graves for men's reputations! to kill their fair fame, and then to snigger and scoff as it goes down into the dust! To dig graves for men's prosperity! doing our best to bury their bright hopes

in a workhouse coffin! To dig graves for their character! Oh! most awful vocation of all, to dig pits for souls! There is no joy in pulling humanity down. There is joy, indeed, in helping men, advising them, opening the way for them, giving them a lift, applauding them, strengthening them to dare and do. Within the last few weeks the newspapers reported the death of the superintendent of the lighthouse works of Messrs. Chance, of Smethwick. The life of that engineer was inseparably connected with the growth and improvement of lighthouse construction. During his active career of more than thirty years he sent out more than a thousand sea-lights, harbour-lights, ship-lights, and these to-day are shining from the Longships, Wolf Rock, Flamborough Head, the Casquets, and many a point of peril. Whilst the engineer sleeps in the grave, from many a rock and shore his noble lights flash out their friendly beams to warn and guide and cheer the lonely mariner. There is something grand about a life like that—a life to brighten the darkness, to cheer the solitude, to save those in sorrow on the sea. Dear brethren, lighthouse-building is better than pit-sinking. Let our life be devoted to the uplifting of men. Let us talk them up, teach them up, encourage them up, pray them up, and sometimes find a golden ladder for them to climb. If we live like this we have joy in life, and joy in death. The lights of mercy that we kindle shall go on burning

when we are in our graves, shedding precious light not only for the forlorn and shipwrecked brother, but preventing the storm-tossed brother making shipwreck of faith and character. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.'

(iv) It is *degrading* work. As soon as you begin to dig you *stoop*, and whatever progress you make you sink with your work. All true work resembles the work of the builder, the workman rises with his work; but the work that seeks to let others down infallibly lets down those who do it. If in conversation we talk down others, if that is our habit and pleasure, we talk ourselves down at the same time, whether we know it or not. As George Sand says, 'Insults, harsh words, detractive utterances kill morally those who give expression to them.' You narrow and debase your own thought and feeling, you wrong your own soul. But if, on the contrary, you are generous in your speech, talking up those whom you can truthfully praise, it is an inspiration to you yourself. We talk about 'means of grace,' but a generous style of conversation is a sacrament much neglected. And so in our professional life we may raise ourselves or sink ourselves accordingly as we treat our comrades. If the spirit of our life is that of a bitter, grudging criticism, if we only pull to pieces our brother's picture, or poem, or sermon, or

speech, or building, or method, we are really spoiling our own genius; but if the spirit of our life is sympathy, and if we find readily and praise readily whatever is good, beautiful, clever, successful in the work of our fellows, we are really nourishing and prompting our intellect in an eminent degree. And so in our business life. It is not necessary to pull others down that we may rise. It was said to me the other day concerning one of the richest men in Bradford, 'He has made more gentlemen than any man in Bradford.' That is the way, so to rise that you lift others up with you. But men whose policy it is to pull others down, to make as many bankrupts as they can, may live long enough to know that to pull others down is not always a sure way to lifting yourself up. I rather think men are beginning to see that whilst competition is unavoidable, the game of beggar-my-neighbour is false and impoverishing all round. And so in our national life. It was once fully believed that there was no way to exalt our nation but by crippling the trade, harassing the colonies, fomenting the politics of neighbouring States. Diplomatists have been pre-eminently pit-diggers—undertakers, making the coffins of empire. But now men are beginning to see that it is not necessary to inflict injuries on other nations to exalt their own, that we rise by mutual goodwill, that at last the enrichment of one is the enrichment of all. Yes, you *stoop* to dig a pit—it is full of dis-

honour and shame and ruin ; digging a pit for your neighbour, you hollow your own grave. Men who dig in the earth are choked with the gases, crushed by the falling rock, buried by the *débris*. And so we fall into the pit—into the bottomless pit, if our life is one in which we work to injure, to impoverish, to degrade our fellows.

The whole idea of the New Testament is that a noble life is devoted to raising one's fellow-men. This was the grand task of our Master. He was constantly raising what was fallen. It was all His thought to lift men up, to draw them up. This was the grand work of the Apostles. How Paul delights to set forth the truth that the work of the Christian was to build up society with living stones into a vast royal palace, into a high, glorious, holy temple. We must not deface, and shatter, and trample upon the living stones, but polish them, and build them into the magnificent structure of millennial regenerated society. Let us not be pit-sinkers, but throne-builders, king-makers, sharing in all the royalty and glory we create.

XIV.

THE SIMPLICITY OF LIFE.

'Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you.'—1 Sam. xii. 24.

THE great scientist is he who discovers some wide-reaching law of nature which explains a thousand facts otherwise disconnected and inexplicable; the great historian is he who seizes some deep social law which determines the development of nations through long periods; the great statesman is he who perceives some distinct profound need of the time, and who by one wise edict brings a nation out of puzzling and threatening complications. These gifted thinkers get to the deep, underlying fact which determines so much in nature, so much in society. Men of lesser genius seek to understand things superficially, and to correct them one by one, but the masters get to the root principle, the dominant law, the prevailing tendency. Now, in our text Samuel has got to the deep and final law of human life—'Only fear the Lord.' Strange, complicated, contradictory, baffling as life seems, there is one simple principle, one sovereign

passion, one master truth, that will solve for us every problem, subdue every opposition, and guide us safely through every difficulty. There are times when a man wishes to say a great deal in a few words, there is not time or opportunity for much speaking, so he condenses all into one burning sentence, and it was so here with Samuel. 'Only fear the Lord.' Not a thousand things to know, but one—fear the Lord; not a thousand things to do, but one—and serve Him in truth.

I. *Let us consider the text in relation to national life.* The kingdom of Israel was at this time in the throes of a great political change. The people in unbelief and terror had asked for a king, and God gave them a king to rule them and to go before them in battle. They stood on the threshold of a new epoch. They were alarmed at the change they had made in their form of government; they were ashamed of the unbelief which had prompted the change; they were full of misgiving as to the consequences of this great political revolution. 'And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.' Then Samuel speaks: Ye have done all this wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, and all shall still be right. It is as if he had said, The grand question is not under what particular form of government you live, but upon your loyalty to God and His righteousness. Be true to Him, and you shall flourish under this or any form of government, you

shall be brought through every difficulty and change of national life into that ultimate glorious condition promised to your fathers. 'Only fear the Lord,' and then 'fear not.'

Did not our Lord teach us most clearly the self-same truth, that everything in human life depends upon the religious idea—that the knowledge and service of God constitute the one grand question which decides all other questions? Did not our Master say, with a fulness and eloquence all His own: Only fear the Lord, and all, all shall be well? Throughout His whole ministry Christ kept severely to this. 'Tell us, therefore, what thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?' Here was a tempting opening for a political dissertation. But Christ severely refrained from anything of the kind. 'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.' Again, we see Jesus in contact with the money-changers, and with them that bought and sold, but He did not take occasion to propound a theory of the wealth of nations, or to state the relations of capital and labour. 'And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.' Here was a grand chance for a deliverance on the rights of property and landlordism, but Christ had no teaching on such themes. 'And He said unto Him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?' Again, 'As Jesus went out of the temple one of His disciples saith unto

Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here.' But Christ had no teaching on æsthetics. What, then, had Christ nothing to do with these things? Has Christianity nothing to do now with government, commerce, law, property, art? Surely Christ has to do with all human relationships, laws, duties, pleasures! The Church of Christ has to do with politics, civil life, social life, material life. But Christ came first of all and above all to reinforce the religious sentiment itself, and then He well knew that all would follow happily in every sphere. He came to show us the Father; to make more clear and full our knowledge of the everlasting righteousness; to shed abroad in our hearts the love of God; to make us conscious of our common brotherhood; to strengthen us by the Holy Spirit, that we might live in truth, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. His mission was to enlarge our minds with noble conceptions; to give peace to our consciences; to cleanse our hearts with a baptism of pure fire; to inspire us with the hope of immortal glory. He said with mighty emphasis, 'Only fear the Lord.' He knew that where the religious sentiment is absent or weak men must go astray in all directions, but if they fear the Lord and serve Him in truth they hold the clue to all life, no matter how far-reaching, complicated, and tangled it may seem.

Is there not a lesson here for us to-day? Many disturbing problems are being forced upon the public

mind—problems arising out of race prejudices, class interests, ignorance, poverty, crime, suffering, wretchedness. And plans of a very startling character are suggested for the solution of these problems. Ours is a day of bold speculation, of audacious experiment, of rapid and sweeping innovation, and it sometimes seems as if directly blows would be struck at authority, rank, property, marriage, and that civilisation itself would go to pieces. That man is greatly mistaken who thinks that things are going to continue pretty much as they are to-day. The world everywhere is conceiving new thoughts, urging new theories; it is bent on trying tremendous experiments, whatever may be the consequence. There can be no doubt but that we live on the eve of vast changes alike in Church and State. And not only do these signs of the times, with fear of change, perplex monarchs, but they trouble many besides. Listen to your great prophet Carlyle, to your great critic Ruskin, to your great poet Tennyson. These and many more are full of misgiving as they ponder the signs of the times. Yet, brethren, have we not firm ground for confidence and hope? Is not our text this morning to us a very precious direction and encouragement? 'Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart.' In all this confusion and conflict true religious faith and feeling shall preserve us, and bring us through in safety. It will prove our sheet-anchor in the storm, our guiding-star in the hour of darkness, our

spring of strength and hope always. Everything depends upon the religious faith and life of our nation. Let this be true and deep, and all shall be well. But it *must* be true and deep. 'In truth with all your heart.' A national profession of Christianity will not save us, a barren orthodoxy will not save us, but if the heart of the nation be sound God will not desert us. 'For consider how great things He hath done for you.' We have had perils before, and they were averted. Again and again have we been threatened with anarchy, popery, despotism, atheism, and again and again the national story shows how Heaven interposed to deliver us. The true religious sentiment revived in the days of Elizabeth by the Lutherans saved us from the curse of that popery which has wasted the wealth, banished the glory, paralysed the life of every modern nation in which it has gained ascendency. The religious sentiment revived in the Puritan saved us from the terrible despotism which the Stuarts sought to fasten upon us. The religious sentiment revived in Wesley and Whitefield saved us from atheism and its horrors when Voltaire with a light heart led the French nation into a sea of blood. And the God that broke the Armada, that sheltered us during the French Revolution, that gave us the victory at Waterloo is with us still, and if the heart of the nation remains true will lead us through all coming struggles into a large place. The religious question comes before

all others, it is the deepest question of all, it decides all others. Let us be full of faith and spirituality; let us honour God and the higher law; let us be true to prayer, to worship, to God's Holy Word; let us do our duty in the fear of God; and God will untie our knots, solve our problems, protect our liberties and glory, and lead us into a larger and richer inheritance. The fear of the Lord is the secret of national unity, strength, contentment, and progress. Let us remember this one thing, and however many the rocks ahead and around, we shall not make shipwreck: 'Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.'

II. *Let us consider the text in relation to personal life.* To the individual life often appears chaotic, confusing, and we are sometimes tempted to give it up in despair. But there is a Divine simplicity in it at last—'Only fear the Lord.' Here in the most embarrassing hours you shall find the clue to lead you into light. When you bring a clear principle into any realm that was a weltering confusion before, at once you turn chaos into order and beauty—all is clear in a moment. So it is in science, in government, so it is in our personal life.

In all perplexities touching *belief* the best philosophy is the philosophy of the text. We look at the mysterious world before us, we listen to the wranglings of thinkers, we find difficulties in revelation, we are

troubled by events which occur in our personal history and experience, and cry at last, utterly baffled and grieved, What is truth? In such hours what are we to do? We cannot read all the books that are written, and if we could it would only confound our confusion. There is one thing to do. Proceed in practical life to perform the duty that presents itself in the fear of God, live from day to day keeping close to conscience, and the Spirit shall teach you the true thing and the right way. In the catacombs we are told that explorers take a thread with them through all the dark passages and tortuous windings, and by this thread find their way again to the light; there is such a thread running through all the dark corridors we tread, and if we simply, practically fear God we shall never fail to find that guiding clue leading into the full light of the upper world. Paul, writing to the Philippians, says, 'Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ: that I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the Gospel.' Here is the same thing you find in the text. Samuel says, 'Only fear the Lord,' and the questions that arise in your future history shall be duly answered, you shall receive instruction and learning as you need it, God shall make His will known to you until Messiah comes, Who shall tell you all things. So Paul: 'Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ,' and your unity

shall be maintained, and you shall be guided into the whole truth. Brethren, do remember that word 'only.' I am speaking to some here, I dare say, who are much perplexed about questions of faith, about great questions touching our duty and hope. You cannot read all the books that are written on these controverted questions, as I say, if the world is big enough to hold them; another course is open to you: be patient, live rightly, look up, and Christ shall give you light. When Frederic Douglass was a slave, escaping from the Southern States, it was strictly necessary for him to travel by night, and his grand guide was the North Star. He knew nothing of the country through which he was passing, it was all silence and darkness and mystery, but keeping his eye on the Star of the North, it guided him to liberty. So you may mentally be traversing a land of mystery, a land of darkness and of the shadow of death, but you have a precious beacon. 'Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth,' follow that star, and the Day-spring shall arise upon you.

In all the perplexities of *actual life* we shall find our safety in following the text. Life is often very dark to us, very bewildering and discouraging. We do not see our way, we know not whether to turn to the right or left. In such periods we cannot do better than remember our text. Does any one object that such mottoes as these are vague generalities, out of which we can get little good? 'Only fear the Lord.'

'Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel.' Does any one cavil at these sayings as if they were not definite and illuminative? When some one objected that the clauses in the American Declaration of Independence, such as, 'All men are equal,' and so forth, were but 'glittering generalities,' Emerson replied that they had proved 'blazing ubiquities,' they had poured the light of salvation on the nation's path at great moments. So with these sayings, they have a very definite and immense significance, they are blazing ubiquities, and they will throw a precious light on all the questions and interests and duties of life, as the pillar of fire lit up every stick and stone of the wilderness. It is astonishing how some simple-minded men find their way to the knowledge of great truths, how they find their way through life with much certainty and palpable success. In a good sense it may be said of them, They are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued as other men. How is it? They lay hold of great principles and promises, and so do not err. 'I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy statutes.' Brethren, life is often far more simple than it seems: stick to a few grand truths and promises and hopes, and you shall not be confounded. In hours of deepest darkness and confusion be loyal to the text—only that, and nothing more. I remember once hearing a devout engine-driver relate his religious experience. He said, 'The other night when I was on duty there was a dense

fog ; we could not see a yard before us, but I knew that the permanent way was under us, and every now and then we caught a glimpse of some signal or other, and in time came safely to the journey's end ; so,' he said, 'I know if I am true to the great commandments and promises God will guide and bring me through.' Brethren, in the darkest hours, when reason and experience utterly fail, remember that the permanent way is there, be true to the line of trust on one side, and obedience on the other, and God will vouchsafe you comforting signals, and in due season bring you to the appointed rest. 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.'

XV.

MISREPRESENTED GOODNESS.

'Let not . . . your good be evil spoken of.'—Rom. xiv. 16.

THERE is such a thing as men seeking to impress the world by their goodness when they really have no goodness. Of the Pharisees Christ said, 'They indeed appear beautiful outward.' It was their aim, their study, their pride to 'appear beautiful'—they wanted the full credit and glory of the thing without having the costly thing itself. Now, the Apostle has in view quite another order of men, men who have the reality of goodness, who have strength of mind and excellence of character, but who are in danger of doing themselves injustice through want of consideration and discrimination. In the controversy about meats and drinks the Apostle recognises that those who regard all meats and drinks as indifferent are right, but he warns these more liberal-minded brethren that they may so express their right opinion as to work immense mischief. We learn, then, that we not only need to be right, but we require judgment in the expression of righteousness; we need not only

to be good and true, but we are to be cautious lest anything in our spirit or manner dim the brightness, mar the beauty, qualify the force of the indwelling reality. We need to be careful about the manifestation of our religion, as we are careful about the essence, reality, depth of it. It is quite possible to be very good, really quite superior in mind and principle and aim, and yet to act in such a way that we offend all who know us, and altogether put them out of conceit with religion itself. There is a well-known book entitled *Roses; How to Grow and How to Show them.* Anybody might say, 'Ah! the question is, how to grow them. Let us know *that*, let us know about the families of roses, the soils that suit them, the situations most favourable to them, how to protect them from their enemies, how to eradicate any special faults they may have, tell us how to bring the massive gold, the imperial purple, the odorous scarlet to perfection—this is the grand business, never mind the showing of them. Bring your flower into fulness of glory, and it will show itself and win the prize.' But I have no doubt the writer of that book has much to say about the science of showing, and for want of this particular skill it is easy to imagine that many a clever grower has missed the prize. So it is with character. A man may be substantially deeply right and noble and pure, and yet exhibit himself in the most unfortunate light; he may do the utmost discredit to himself and to his Master. So we have not only to

see that the root of the matter is in us, to grow the graces, but having grown them we must study to show them to the glory of the heavenly Flower Master.

Let us notice several ways in which we cause our good to be evil spoken of.

I. We may do it by *sadness*. A serious spirit is a true spirit, and one we should ever cherish. The epitaph on the poet in Westminster Abbey is strangely false :—

> ' Life is a jest, and all things show it.
> I thought so once, and now I know it.'

No ; life is no jest—it is unspeakably serious, and all true men are deeply in earnest. But, my brethren, how easy it is to turn seriousness into sadness and sourness and moroseness, and thus make a really grand character into a practically repulsive one ! With all our solemnity of mind and feeling there ought to be cheerfulness. Whatever the pessimists may say, all men feel that nature at the bottom is harmonious, that life in its essence is gladsome, that when you get to the truth of things you get to music, to singing, to loveliness, to glory, to joy, and we instinctively turn away from habitual sadness as from what is untruthful and unwholesome. And we are right. A man who is all laughter counts for little, a man who is all groans counts for less ; but he who lets a hopeful temper shine through all his thoughtfulness and reverence and earnestness does much to recommend his faith. Do not be afraid to let your

nature utter its impulses of gladness, to let it express itself in humour and mirth and song and fellowship ; do not be afraid to realise all the bright things of your faith. Let those about us see that with all our gravity we are truly gay, that with all our sobriety there is a brightness of soul that we do not care either to quench or to conceal.

II. We may do it by *narrowness*. We know well that self-denial has a large place in true life, and that the world is sometimes prone to call a noble self-denial narrow-mindedness, strait-lacedness. This we must be prepared for. Strait is the gate, narrow is the way that leadeth unto life. But is there not sometimes a voluntary self-denial that is really narrowness, and that very much damages the reputation of really good men ? This illiberality of mind sometimes reveals itself in an orthodoxy that prevents a man from looking calmly and boldly at the religious questions which the circumstances of the age may bring into discussion; sometimes it reveals itself in a harsh, exclusive denominationalism ; sometimes in an ascetic strictness of life which causes a man to think and speak intolerantly about all enjoyments and recreations ; sometimes it shows itself in a fear of worldly conformity, that exaggerates the mint, the anise, and the cummin of ecclesiastical law and observance. Brethren, let us beware of a voluntary repulsive narrowness, that is really of a suspicious, conceited, uncharitable spirit. Let us hold a broad theology—a theology as wide as

judgment, mercy, and truth ; let us belong to a broad Church, a Church so wide that it will give space to all the genuine powers and passions of our large manifold humanity. Let not our spirit be mistrustful, critical, censorious, prohibitive, but hopeful, sympathetic, tolerant, knowing that in God the world is ours, our life ours, in the fulness thereof. Jesus Christ stood at the utmost remove from the prudish, pedantic, carping, pettifogging Pharisee ; He, above all men, had broad sympathies, largeness of mind, magnanimity; He was the ideal Catholic. Let it be thus with us. Let us live with holy liberty and confidence and charity. Let us be broad, yet pure ; broad, yet true ; broad, yet intense and enthusiastic in the service of our Lord.

III. We may do it by *hardness*. You may see this in business men sometimes. A Christian trader conducts his business on exact principles, and is in all things severely conscientious. And yet nobody admires him, nobody likes him. His customers do not, his fellow-tradesmen do not, his servants do not. What is the reason ? He is hard ; his conscientiousness looks very much like selfishness, and is currently reckoned as such. Now, that Christian trader might be all that a smart business man needs to be, exact, just, firm, and yet be popular into the bargain. He wants to understand the by-play of life—how to soften the severe rigid laws of the business sphere with little acts of forbearance, compromise, forgiveness, patience, gene-

rosity. Then he would be a successful merchant and a favourite into the bargain. And you may see this hardness in family life. It was said of the mother of one of our most distinguished women that she was in many respects a most excellent mother, most methodical and managing ; she did her duty to her children, worked for them, watched over them, made sacrifices for their welfare, and yet there was no sympathy in it all—not the kind word, the loving look, the tender attention, the soothing accent, the melting moment, the affectionate clasp, the tear of pity, the approving smile. Her conduct was intelligent and faithful, but formal, unbending, hard. And the gifted daughter grew up feeling that the lack of warmth and love in her early training was a lifelong loss. It is not enough that we are just and faithful, we must be full of sympathy and conciliation, yielding as well as firm, so that the house, as well as every other place, may be filled with the odour of the spikenard.

Oh, what a grand thing is graciousness in all our spirit and conduct! Really some excellent people are sadly wanting here. They do not know in the least how to show their roses—they thrust the posy into your face in such a brusque manner that you are more scratched with the thorns than regaled by the fragrance. Instead of their distilling like the dew, they riddle you like hailstones. We often hear about 'diamonds in rough ;' there are Christians after that order, but it is a serious limitation and defect to be in the rough—

Christ's diamonds, like Himself, ought to be full of beauty and grace.

IV. We may do it by *unseasonableness*, not sufficiently considering time and circumstance. The chapter before us illustrates this special point. Some of the Christians to whom Paul wrote, felt, and felt rightly, that they were free to eat all meats, to disregard conventional holy days, and yet the Apostle shows them that to assert their independence might become a perplexity to other Christians who could not receive the larger doctrine, and therefore begs that they will at present refrain from asserting their larger view, lest their good should be evil spoken of. Judgment was wanted, restraint was wanted, or their very excellency would partake of the nature and influences of a defect. One of the very best definitions of eloquence that I know is 'timeliness,' and it may also be largely accepted as a definition of character. Character is timeliness, a fine perception of what is becoming to the persons, to the place, to the hour. If we do not attend to this our mirthfulness may be reckoned levity, our strictness intolerance, our liberality weakness, our large-mindedness licence. We have need to pray constantly that 'we may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,' so shall we serve the apple of gold in the basket of silver.

Brethren, let us not despise this matter. Do not say, Let us get the solid thing, and never mind the

rest. A jeweller works altogether with gold and gems ; but it is not enough to mix these anyhow ; the goldsmith of all men must be an artist, with a fine eye for elegance of form and harmony of colour, or he will succeed in making gold unpleasant and diamonds vulgar. So we, as Christians, must be careful how we arrange our precious material, for of the virtues we may make an eyesore or a picture. We must work with judgment, sympathy, courtesy, or our good will be evil spoken of. The spices are all sweet, but they must be mixed with the skill of the apothecary ; the gems are all bright, but they must be ordered with taste if they are to be fashioned into a breastplate of beauty and glory. 'So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' Look at the modern table-lamp, what a picture they have made of it. Beautiful tiles for the ornamentation of the base, its polished brass standard, large handsome shades of satin and silk and lace, a wealth of colour and elegance are lavished on the lamp, and it is altogether the most exquisite and pleasing object in the room. How different it would be if you were simply to set your light on a rough candlestick or in a rude lanthorn ! So it is with men of character ; one with much merit is someway most displeasing, whilst another so lets his light shine that it is delightful to be in the neighbourhood, and men give thanks to God for such a witness.

XVI.

THE FIRST CITY AND THE LAST.*

'And Cain builded a city.'—Gen. iv. 17.

'And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.'—Rev. xxi. 2.

IN the Book of Genesis we have the first city built by Cain, in the book of the Revelation the last city built by Christ. What I specially wish to show is how the spirit of Christ will purify and exalt city life, how it will arrest the evil of the multitude within the city walls, how it will develop the good, and bring the corporate life to a glorious perfection. It was said of Augustus that he found Rome brick, and left it marble; but Christ shall work a far grander transformation, for, finding the cities of the earth cities of Cain, He shall change them into New Jerusalems, holy cities, cities of God. We must not look for the city that John saw in some future world, strange and distant; we must look for it in the purification of the present order. That city is already coming down from

* Preached in connection with the united services of the Methodist Churches in Manchester.

God out of heaven, it is even now purging and beautifying the cities of the earth, and it will never cease coming down until the corrupt cities of the nations are built up in the crystal and gold of truth and justice and peace.

And I do not think, dear brethren, that our subject is inappropriate to this special occasion. John Wesley fixed the attention of his people on the positive evils of the world, and made us to feel that our great business was to seek most earnestly for the conversion of the people and the spreading of Scriptural holiness through the land. Whatever else Methodism may be, it is pre-eminently a working Church, aiming to elevate everything that concerns society, through the conversion and elevation of the individual man or woman. In the pursuit of its vocation it has not neglected the villages of the land. Amid great difficulties, it has ministered to the peasantry, and been to tens of thousands of these a mighty blessing. And in the great cities of the land it has striven for more than a century to render life more pure and kind. God only can measure its benign influence, and its work in raising the character and life of our crowded populations. Brethren, we find ourselves in this great city of Manchester, and this day we desire to strengthen one another's hands not only in the work of our personal salvation, but in our evangelical work. We wish to look at the fundamental evils of society, to refresh our souls with another view of Christ's purpose and power,

and so to feed the flame of our enthusiasm that we may go forth with greater devotion and bravery to set up Christ's kingdom in our midst. This, it seems to me, is the high purpose of this day. Let us then go back to our text, and show how our Lord aims to transform the city of Cain into a heavenly city, and how we may be co-workers with the Master Builder.

The city of Cain is the city of the past ; it is also, alas ! to a large extent the city of the present. Our cities contain much that is really grand, much of which men may honestly be proud. They are centres of intellectual triumphs, they reveal in manifold ways the force and wealth of human genius. Great squares, majestic buildings, solemn temples, palaces full of treasures, wide streets alive with traffic, forests of masts, miles of shops teeming with things of use or ornament, gardens, statues, fountains, museums, and all the wonderful organisations, articulations, and movements of society—all these testify to the strength, the delicacy, the magnificence of the human mind. It is impossible to think of London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, New York without being deeply impressed by the spectacles they present of human genius and power and splendid aspiration. And yet in these very cities how much there is to give us pain ! How much there is of ignorance, poverty, crime, suffering—of low life, sad life, shameful life ! The city holds within itself thousands of the well-dressed, who are so narrowed and hardened by worldliness that they hardly ever

glance at the strip of blue above the street; and it holds thousands more who live and die in rags, dirt, wretchedness, despair. 'When He beheld the city He wept over it,' and despite all the material and social glories of our own modern civilisation, a great city is still a sad sight. Now, what makes a great city a sad sight? what is the cause of its terrible and perplexing contrasts? and how will Christ cure these evils, and bring the clean thing out of the unclean? Let us see.

I. The spirit of Cain was the spirit of *ungodliness*. It was the spirit of worldliness, it was the fastening to the earthly side of things, and the leaving out of the spiritual and Divine; it made material life a substitute for God, and in all things aimed to make man independent of God. It was government without God. 'Cain builded a city'—he laid the foundation of the worldly rule, and laid it in the spirit of pride and independence. It was culture without God. Craftsmanship, music, poetry, song were developed by the Cainites. 'Tubal was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.' 'Tubal Cain was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.' Lamech said unto his wives, 'Hearken unto my song.' It was wealth and power without God. It was fashion and pleasure without God. The names of their women signify their appreciation of personal beauty and adornment. The spirit of Cain was throughout the spirit of ungodliness, the acceptance and development of all

the gifts of God, yet ignoring the Giver, and in this spirit Cain built his city. Brethren, this spirit has prevailed largely in the city life of the past, and it has worked the ruin of rich and powerful civilisations. The Apostle Paul in the first chapter of the Romans makes very clear how the spirit of ungodliness brought upon the old empires shame, misery, destruction. 'They reprobated the knowledge of God, and God gave them over to a reprobate mind,' and then came the vices which turned their glory into shame and brought their greatness to the dust. The consciousness of God is the salt of our personal life, and the consciousness of God is the salt of our social and national life. National atheism, whether practical or theoretical, works national ruin. There is no adequate check then to our pride, our selfishness, our licence. Without God, the more power we have the sooner we destroy ourselves ; without God, the richer we are the sooner we rot.

In opposition to this Christ brings into city life the element of spirituality. 'Coming down out of heaven from God.' It is in the recognition of the living God that Christ creates the fairer civilisation. He puts into our heart assurance of God's existence, government, watchfulness, equity, faithfulness. It is comparatively easy to see God in nature, in the landscape, the sky, the sea, the sun, but Christ has brought God into the city, identified Him with human life and interests and duties, and joys and sorrows,

and just as we accept and enforce the Divine element in city life, so shall our cities flourish in strength and happiness. We must recognise God's power and wisdom, His truth and justice, His holiness and love, that He is the God of love and peace, and consolation and hope and joy, if the life of the million is to be balanced, disciplined, pacified, perfected. We cannot do without God in the city—here where temptation is most bitter, pleasure most enticing, sorrow most tragical, where material is most abundant, opportunity most common, secrecy most practicable, passion most excited, where character suffers most fiery trial, here can be no good thing except as we are kept in awe by God's majesty, comforted by His sympathy, strengthened by His government, inspired by His love. We cannot build cities without God, and if we do they fall to pieces again. Dear brethren, let us to the utmost bring into city life the consciousness of God, the spiritual, the Divine, the infinite, the eternal, and, as the makers of Venice built out of the slime a city of gold and gems, so shall we build out of the mud of our present earthly civilisation a kingdom of God, full of beauty and liberty and infinite blessedness.

II. The spirit of Cain was the spirit of *unbrotherliness*. 'Cain slew his brother.' It was Cain who asked, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' He specially denied the brotherly relation, he specially affirmed the selfish policy. And in Lamech you see how the

hateful spirit has prevailed. In that first Iliad of blood and iron you hear the murderous, insolent boast, 'If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.' The first city was built in the spirit of a cruel egotism, built by a fratricide, and Cain's red finger-marks are on the city still. The bloodstains of the old builder are everywhere. The rich things of commerce are stained by extortion and selfishness—the bloody finger-marks are not always immediately visible, but they are generally there. There are red finger-prints on the palaces of the great, red stains on the gold of the opulent. Look at the gorgeous raiment of fashion, and the dismal blot is there. Go into the flowery paths of pleasure, and you will see selfishness spilling blood for its indulgence. The soldiers tramp past—ah! the imprint of both red hands are there. Yes, the foundation-stone of the city was laid on the corpse of a brother, and ever since has the city been built up in the spirit of rapacity, ambition, and cruelty. And what is the outcome of this selfishness? It creates everywhere weakness and wretchedness and peril. It throws a strange black shadow on all the magnificence of civilisation. And in the end, whatever has the stain of blood on it rots and smells and perishes.

The spirit of Christ is the spirit of brotherliness. 'Cain slew his brother.' 'Christ died for us.' Christ brings a new spirit and a new law into society; we must love one another. There are red marks once more

on the new city, but this time they are the Builder's own blood, teaching us that as He laid down His life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Oh! what a mighty difference will the working of this spirit make in all our civilisation. Can you measure it? How it will inspire men, soften their antagonisms, lighten their burdens, wipe away their tears, make rough places smooth, dark places bright, crooked places plain. I said just now that whatever had the bloodstain of selfishness on it, no matter how great it was, or strong, or rich, it would rot and perish, but whatever has the consecration of unselfishness in it will grow in sweetness and strength and preciousness, it shall be incorruptible and immortal. We have seen what wretched dissolving cities lust has built, greed has built, hate has built, but oh, what a glorious city shall love build! That is the city we are looking for. Oh scene surpassing fable, and yet true! 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God.' Dear brethren, let us preach the gospel of love in season and out of season, and the city that John saw in the clouds our children shall see established on the earth, in the place of this Babylon of to-day, so full of sorrows.

III. The spirit of Cain was the spirit of *unrighteousness*. 'Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' Cain acted in untruthfulness, injustice, violence. And

in that spirit he built his city. 'He was of that wicked one.' The devil was the architect of the first city, and Cain its builder, and the spirit of faction, lying, robbery, and fratricide has prevailed in the city ever since. And we see what has come out of that spirit of unrighteousness. It has made our grandeur hateful, it has made our fine gold dim, our luxuries bitter, our purple loathsome as a leper's robe ; it has put discord into our music, it has turned our glory into grief, it has thrust the death's head and cross-bones amid all the flowers of our civilisation. Our great populations are full of wretchedness, because there is everywhere such lack of truth and equity and mercy.

The spirit of Christ is the spirit of righteousness. Christ comes not only with the sweetness of love, but with the majesty of truth and justice. He creates, wherever He is received, purity of heart, conscientiousness, faithfulness, uprightness of spirit and action. And in this spirit of righteousness shall we, my brethren, build the ideal city. We read of this final metropolis, 'And the wall of the city had twelve foundations. . . . And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones' (Rev. xxi. 14, 19). Mark here that the foundations are specially noted, not the walls, towers, domes, but the foundations, and the foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones. If you would build a grand city take care of the foundations, and do not put rotten rubbish in ; begin to build with sapphire,

sardonyx, amethyst, emerald, things just, true, pure, brotherly, kind, unselfish ; build your city on lovely, precious, firm moral qualities, and God only knows what walls and bulwarks and palaces shall spring out of such living, majestic, eternal grounds. Some time ago, in one of the Reviews, a writer gave a picture of the London of the future, when all sanitary and political improvements shall have been perfected. No dust in the streets, no smoke in the air, no noise, no fog, spaces everywhere for flowers and sunlight, the sky above always pure, the Thames running below a tide of silver ; but think of the city of the future in whose life, laws, institutions, trade, politics, pleasure the righteousness of Christ shall find full and final manifestation. Where is the poet, the painter, who shall paint for us that golden city, so holy and clean ? It is painted for us here ; it is 'the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God : and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.'

Brethren, let us have great faith in the future. Some amongst us look very gloomily on the future of our nation, because one of the chief tendencies of our day is that of centralisation. Thirty years ago the rural element preponderated over the urban ; twenty years ago the urban population was equal ; and now the urban population is considerably in excess of the rural. Then we are told that the city which first attracts men next destroys them. City life is a course

of deterioration, physical, intellectual, and moral. But let us not despair. God is not going to break down in this way. The resources of civilisation are *not* exhausted. We say sometimes, 'God made the country, and man the town,' but God will make the town before He finishes, and the town that He makes shall outshine all the glory of nature as much as living immortal beings are beyond all material things. 'A holy city; why, it seems a contradiction in terms,' but it shall come. I have walked in the silent streets of a city that flourished two thousand years ago, but I should like to see the city of two thousand years to come. No workhouses, no prisons, no dram-shops, no barracks, no policemen, no rags, no complaining in the streets. That city is already descending out of heaven from God.

Let our faith for the future be in Christ. The faith of Jesus Christ goes to the root of all the social evils which trouble us, and deals with them effectively. It can solve our problems, heal our maladies, soothe our sorrows, make us strong and pure. Said a great politician, 'We want lights which are not incendiary torches.' Reformations and revolutions are destructive to such a large extent of what is precious—we want lights to guide and save which will not also destroy the precious things of civilisation. The truths in Christ are altogether constructive. Softly, silently, but certainly shall the doctrines of godliness, brotherhood, and righteousness work, until all vicious things

shall be displaced and purged, and the whole body politic shall be built up of silver, gold, and precious stones. The faith of Christ, and His faith alone, can deal with, and restrain, and exalt the mighty, passionate life of our great cities.

Let us be co-workers with Christ. Put your chrysolite in somewhere. In our personal life, in our domestic life, in our public life, in our evangelistic life let us put in some real work. We are poor creatures if we have no part in this. We must have a brick in this time. Let us be true to the grand Master Builder, and when the earth in her beauty is taken to the breast of God we shall sit down at the bridal feast and share the immortal joy.

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